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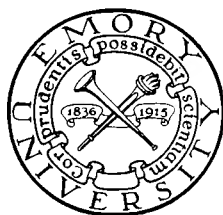
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# MISREPRESENTATION.

A Novel.

BY

ANNA H. DRURY,

AUTHOR OF

"FRIENDS AND FORTUNE," "DEEP WATERS," "TWO BROTHERS,"  
ETC., ETC.

**FIFTH EDITION.**

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TO

THE REV JOHN JENNINGS, M.A.,  
CANON OF WESTMINSTER, AND RECTOR OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST,

THIS VOLUME

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

*As a Memorial*

OF THE GRATEFUL AFFECTION WHICH ALL MUST FEEL

WHO ENJOY THE PRIVILEGE OF HIS FRIENDSHIP

AND OF HIS PASTORAL CARE.





# MISREPRESENTATION.

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## CHAPTER I.

Horatio—or I do forget myself.—*Shakespeare.*

THE afternoon was as cold as any lover of what are affectionately called, 'real old-fashioned English winters,' could desire: a tingling, uncompromising frost, beloved of skaters and brisk pedestrians, had prevailed for some weeks; beautiful to look at, as far as landscape was concerned, when the short, struggling sunbeams lit up the white branches as with a myriad lamps, and made every spider's web an ornament for royalty; but sharp and searching to every other sense. It was a kind of cold such as we ignorant Londoners can only read or hear of. We know what a long frost means, and what it looks like; the phase in domestic history when pipes burst, and coals rise, and the *gamins* make slides under the very eye of the policeman, and the parks are full of skaters, and the song of the frozen-out gardener is warbled in the public ear. We understand all this, and think, when we read of Russia and the Arctic Regions, that from our own experience we can tell how disagreeable a constant hard season must be. But what is all this to the cold in the country, in such a corner of our island as we are about to visit—nearer north than south, and east than west—where no friendly opposite row stands between your windows and the cutting blast, which comes unchecked direct upon your homestead, from wild moors far away, like a charge of savage cavalry—flinging a carbine volley of snow and hail against door and window-pane—bursting in wherever a crack or crevice has been left unguarded, and threatening, in its exulting rage, to strip roof and wall of every defence, and scatter you and yours like the last dead leaves whirled from the trees?—a cold that no roasting fire can warm through an inch beyond the bars, that freezes the water in your bedroom, and the panes in your window, and the very hair of your head, to say nothing of the ideas within, which lie ice-bound like the tunes in Baron Munchausen's horn? Cold? yes, this is cold indeed, and if you cannot live through it, so much

the worse for you ; if you *can* live and get warm in spite of everything, why then it is the finest thing for your health you can conceive, an air-bath, a tonic, *que sais-je* ? It had need be something good, so we may give it the credit of whatever it pleases, and hope that somebody is the better for it.

Armed with some such consolatory philosophy, a traveller had been braving his difficulties on the February afternoon in question ; pursuing his way tolerably well so long as the iron civilizer connected him with London—rather worse on the top of a cross-country coach, full of crosser-country passengers, to the town of Shareham, which no railway went near ; and worst of all, in his attempt to get himself and his portmanteau five miles further through the snow, to the village of Cannymoor. The good people of Shareham had done their best to persuade him from the latter undertaking, assuring him the snow lay fifteen feet deep, that no horse that ever ate hay could pull him through it, that on Monday last a butcher's lad had been nigh upon smothered, and three old women had not been heard of since Tuesday, and so on ; but to no purpose. The traveller had gone through too many worse trials to be baffled by such trifles as these ; his money and pertinacity, as usual, carried the day, and a tax-cart from the inn undertook to carry himself. Over the bleak moor that lay between the town and the village, the sturdy horse toiled and strained for three miles and a half without flinching ; at that point, the snow had so balled in his feet, that before the driver could jump out to relieve him, he slipped—fell, and could with difficulty be lifted again, both knees cut, and shaking all over. The wise men of Shareham had not been so far wrong, and the traveller for a moment repented.

'How much further is it, my man ?' he asked, looking discontentedly along the dreary expanse.

'Better nor a mile,' was the answer, hardly audible behind the thick coat collar and comforter.

'Better nor a mile ? so long as it is better I have no objection, but if it be two, I can walk as far. Bring on the horse as best you can ; you can put him up in the village, I suppose. There is an inn of some kind, is there not ?'

'Oh, ah, there's a place they call an inn, and a stable too, that a dog would turn up his nose at. They feeds their beasts on cabbage-stalks and 'tato-parings down there.'

'Oh indeed ! and what do their visitors get ?'

'Oh, but that'll depend,' said the driver, still busy with his horse's legs ; 'steady, lad !—they don't see so many in the course of the year, I fancy, sir, that they can afford not to make much on 'em.'

‘Is it so very retired, then?’

‘It’s just out o’ the way of everything, that’s what it is, sir : and it is just as well ; for if it was in the way, it would do nobody any good that I know of.’

‘You seem to owe it a grudge,’ said the traveller, as he walked along by the side of the vehicle.

‘Well, sir, and I’ll tell you why. Maybe you never saw these parts before, so you won’t understand unless I do tell you. When I was a lad here, Cannymoor was just a bit of a village, and a rare place for sport ; the Squire as lived at the Manorhouse then, kept nought but sporting company, and a jolly lot they were. Maybe, they were a bit too jolly to last ; any way, he spent all his money, and then he sold the land, one bit after another, and one wisacre came down from London with a great scheme for a railway across country, just as if one hadn’t enough of them lines, taking the bread out of people’s mouths ; and the line was to make Cannymoor a big place, and he must needs cut up the old grounds into building lots, and run up what he called genteel cottages ; and then some of the Sharcham folks, who didn’t know when they were well off, must needs go and live in them. However, it didn’t pay, and the party was ruined out and out, and serve him right.’

‘But is there no gentleman s family residing at Cannymoor now?’

‘Ay, ay—there’s them in the Manorhouse, and there’s the parson, and there’s one or two more decent people enough.’

‘But you said the Squire had sold the property.’

‘So he did, and a cousin of his bought the house, and lives there, and—but maybe it’s there you’re going, sir?’

‘No, my friend, I’m bound for the parsonage.’

‘Oh, then you’re all right. He is a right good ’un, *he is : he’ll* make you comfortable ; but there are some on ’em there that *is* precious close, for sartin ! But I beg your pardon, sir, for talking so much.’

‘By no means, my friend—who did you say bought up the estate you spoke of?’

‘Why, sir, the best part of it, all the houses and so forth, were picked up, he best knows how, by a sharp old gentleman, living there now, a Mr. Spindler, and I’ve *heard* say, he did mean to get the Manorhouse too, and be Squire, and landlord, and master, and everything. But Mr. Lyndon, the present one, that is, was too quick for him, and got it first. So one has got all the money, and the other has got the name of the thing : it’s not much money Mr. Lyndon has, but no one thinks the worse of him for that ; and he’s worth a dozen like old Spindler, that he is.’

‘Has Mr. Lyndon any family?’

‘Oh, there’s his lady, poor old body, whose head’s a bit touched



—and it warn't over and above valuable afore ; and two ladies—and there's—woa ! hold up !' as his horse slipped again, and was only just saved by a dexterous jerk from being down. 'You'd best step on, sir, begging your pardon, or you'll be froze outright. It's straight ahead, sir—you can't miss it.'

The traveller hesitated a moment, and a shade of impatience passed over his brown features ; but after a brief pause, took the advice of his loquacious charioteer, and set off at a rapid pace. The exercise quickened his blood after the severe cold and exposure of the latter part of his journey ; and his eye took in, almost unconsciously, every feature of the landscape, as if it were collecting materials for a journal ; the general impression on his mind being, that somewhere about here the world might be expected to leave off. It was almost cheering to look back at the tax-cart and horse, creeping along the track he had made ; and to hear the jingle of the harness, and the encouraging interjections of the driver, every now and then brought near by the gusty wind—and feel that something living was within hail. By degrees, however, he found himself in a more habitable region : a small farm-house or two—then a few white genteel cottages with flower-gardens—then a village street, with cottages very far from genteel—a church, with a low square tower, pretending to no beauty of any kind, and rather out of repair, and a homely churchyard full of snow, except on one brown hillock, raised since it fell.

Here the traveller began to look about him. Where the church was the parson might be expected ; and yet the venerable parsonage he saw in his mind's eye was certainly not discernible by those of his body. Shouts of boyish voices behind the church showing that life existed somewhere, he followed the sounds in hope of information, and found himself spectator of a vigorous display of snowballing. The chilly missiles flew so fast, and the boys ran about so confusedly, the traveller could not at first make out the plan of the proceeding. When he did, his amusement changed into wrath. Half-a-dozen sturdy lads were pelting a little fellow, much better dressed than any of them, and much younger—pelting him as hard and fast as their hands could ply ; and he, undaunted by numbers, flushed, panting, struggling, was dodging their shot, returning it, displaying courage and energy enough to deserve a medal ; and at the same time, with good generalship, gradually working a retreat towards the nearest gate. Whether he would ever have reached it unaided, historians will find difficult to decide. The traveller did not wait to discover, but darting into the midst of the fray, tripped up one assailant, and rolled another over, at the same moment that the gate was thrown open by a rosy girl of thirteen, who called out, 'Walter, Walter ! run in !'

Walter moved to the refuge with his face to the foe ; a big boy rushed after him, snatched at his collar, and pulled him down. The next minute he was pulled down himself and half-buried in the snow, while the traveller had set the little Hector on his legs. Simultaneously with this last *coup de main*, a short, stout old gentleman in black rushed out of the gate, and flung his oaken stick at the heads of the public generally, with such hearty good-will and dexterity, that the field was cleared in an instant of all but the last-mentioned great fellow, thrown down by the traveller. He had now picked himself up, and stood looking sullen and dubious.

'You are a pretty set of rascals, are you not?' roared the stout old gentleman ; 'and you, Stephen, that ought to know better, a great strong chap like you to bully a little fellow, and a gentleman's son ! If Mr. Lyndon hears of this, your father will hear of it, I can tell you that.'

'Father won't care if he do,' was the answer ; 'we arn't Mr. Lyndon's tenants, and we don't care *that* for he !'

'But what did you set on this young gentleman for ? Tell me that—and just pick up my stick meanwhile, as I may want it to thrash you with presently.'

The lad's sulky face relaxed a little ; he moved to where the stick had fallen, and brought it to the old gentleman, with a touch of his cap.

'It warn't only me, and we didn't go for to hurt him—but——'

'They are a pack of ignorant ninnies !' interrupted Walter, in great wrath ; 'they wouldn't believe what I said, and they said impertinent things of me and mamma ; and Stephen is a great big bully, with no more sense than a cow, and I told him so, and I tell him so again ; and as he doesn't believe I speak the truth, as soon as I am a strong tall man, I'll fight him, and beat him too—that I will !'

Stephen muttered something about that being easier said than done, which seemed probable, but irritated Walter still more.

'Go home, lad,' said the old gentleman, shaking his stick ; 'this does you no credit. You ought to be at work, as I told your father yesterday, instead of wasting your time like this. Off with you—come !' and beginning to twirl his stick as if for another fling, Stephen took to his heels with some precipitation.

The old gentleman laughed, and turning to Walter, now first noticed the stranger, and stood looking at him in perplexed surprise. 'I am sure I know that face, or ought to know it,' said he, as if thinking aloud.

'If you do not, Dr. Home, I cannot blame you,' said the traveller ; 'many years have passed since I was your private pupil, and helped you thrash two footpads on the way to Wyckersley. You have the same pacific spirit as ever, I see.'

‘Now I know that voice, and that sarcastic tone, and all but the bronzed face and mustachios. The Wychersley footpads? There was only one lad with me then, and he was a slight fresh-looking fellow when I saw him last—you would make two of him.’

‘Time and travel, my dear sir, do wonders. You forget how long it is ago. The slight, fresh-looking, and provoking pupil who tried your patience so often, stands before you now, in hopes of trying it a little more, if you will own him.’

‘Then it *is* the same; I know the look of your eye now, and right glad I am, and a hundred thousand welcomes, Maurice Gray! Why, where in the world have you dropped from? It is years since I heard of, or saw you. Ay, ay, I recognize your touch now, in the way you tripped up those lads: that was the Wychersley style all the world over. I am so glad to see you, Maurice. I can’t tell you how glad I am!’

If his tongue could not tell, his hands did their best, for they were grasping those of his guest with the energy and vigour of twenty-five.

‘In with you, Walter; there is Sophy catching her death of cold waiting for you. Come in, Maurice Gray, come in! the best of my house shall be yours, and a hearty welcome. How good of you to come so far to see an old friend! And where have you been all this while? Come along in, and let us understand all about it; for what with one thing, and what with another, I am beginning not to know what I am about.’

The traveller gladly obeyed: a quick glance round as he entered was sufficient to show him how very small were the parsonage accommodations: it stood in a little garden, without stable or any signs of rural luxury; and directly the threshold was crossed, the vicinity of the kitchen became palpably discernible. There was a good fire, however, in the one parlour, and though small and low, it was tidy, and smelt of nothing worse than old books.

‘These are our quarters, Sophy’s and mine, Maurice; and such as they are, the longer you share them the better. You don’t know my grand-daughter, do you? Shake hands with Mr. Gray, Sophy, and tell him you will do your best to tease him as much as he used to tease me.’

‘That, I fear, is impossible,’ said the traveller, as he returned Sophy’s shy, but not ungratified greeting; ‘but with my old name, Doctor, I hope I have laid aside some of my old errors. On my uncle Randolph’s death, I inherited his name as well as his fortune.’

‘Ay, ay! then he did you justice at last? I am right glad to hear it, lad. And you are a man of property, then, are you? It is in good hands, I warrant. And I must call you Randolph, must

I? Well, I have no objection; I am glad he righted you before he died. Ay, things look rather different close to the grave to what they do a mile off; men learn more there in minutes than they do in years elsewhere. But what am I thinking of?—your luggage, where is it?

Mr. Randolph explained, upon which out ran his eager host, shouting, 'Colly, Colly!' and at his voice appeared from the neighbouring kitchen, savouring strongly of broth, a long, bony figure, with high cheek-bones, and dark bushy brows, and bare arms, all muscle and sinew, who dropped a curtsey, as she wiped her hands on her apron. 'Colly, woman, be alive now! here is a friend of mine come to stay with me, and his luggage is in a cart, and the cart in the snow, and the horse lame, Colly, and your friend Bob leading it. Send some one to help, quick! and, Colly,' following her as she moved away, 'get the spare room ready' (they boasted a spare room, some eleven feet square), 'and the fire lit, and toss up something hot and good as soon as you can; I'll come and get out a bottle of port; Sophy will help you directly with sheets and all that. An old friend and pupil, Colly; so we must make him welcome; bustle about, that's a good little woman.'

The good little woman, whose length appeared painfully disproportioned to the size of the house, looked at Mr. Randolph for a minute or so from head to foot, smoothed her apron deliberately, nodded her head with a smile, and with a half-audible 'We'll see,' vanished as promptly as she had come. The old clergyman rubbed his hands.

'There! Colly has undertaken it all; now you are all right. There is not such another little woman as Colly, sir, take her for all in all, not in all Queen Victoria's dominions. There is nothing she cannot do, or will not do, for those she loves. You would not suppose it, perhaps, but Colly has the tenderest feelings, the softest heart. She got the name of Colly from a wild young pupil of mine, who said she made such a capital shepherd's dog, and so she does. Ah! those pupils, what a life I have had with them! but not one has had the kindness to do as you have done, Maurice, and come after so many years to see the old man before he died. I thank thee, lad, I do, from the bottom of my heart!'

Randolph mechanically returned the pressure of his old friend's cordial hand, but it must be confessed he had paid little attention to his words. Ever since their entrance, he had been unable to take his eyes off little Walter, as he stood warming his numbed fingers at the fire, and arguing in a low tone with Sophy, who, while she secretly admired him as a prodigy of cleverness, felt it her duty, as his senior, to dispute all the propositions he somewhat dogmatically laid down for her belief. The traveller looked, and



looked again ; for those eyes, full, dark, and beaming, the peculiar shape of the lid, and deep fringe of the lash, were as familiar to his memory as the home of his childhood ; and as he looked, his heart grew sick within him.

‘Fool that I am!’ he thought, ‘and worse than fool ! In everything I meet I imagine I see what I crave, and every black-eyed urchin must needs remind me—as if there were no dark eyes belonging to any one else in the world, or as if it would do me any earthly good to see them !’

He turned away with an effort, to heed, as he should have done sooner, his old friend’s hospitable arrangements and suggestions.

‘Doctor, once for all, if I am to put you or your family to the slightest inconvenience, out of your house I tramp without more ado. I am an old traveller—have been all over the world ; you cannot exhaust my resources. I can find bed and board where another would go sleepless and supperless ; a hammock, a sheepskin, or a cupboard, is bedroom enough for me, and I defy you to name the dish I have not found palatable.’

Walter’s dark eyes turned eagerly on the traveller.

‘Oh ! have you really been all over the world ? Will you tell me all about it ? I do so love to hear about travels, and so does mamma, and she was only wishing the other day I could see somebody who could tell me all about the Geysers that Mackenzie saw in *Winter Evenings*. Did you ever see a Geyser ?’

‘Yes.’

‘Oh ! did you *really*, now ! And will you tell mamma and me all about it ?’

‘Who is your mamma ?’ asked Randolph, with a smile, though his lip trembled.

‘Who is *my* mamma ? Why, Lady Adelaide Lyndon, to be sure !’ said Walter, in a tone that plainly asked, ‘Where have you lived not to know that ?’

Rather to his discomfiture, the stranger laid one hand on his shoulder, and with the other put back the tangled hair from his forehead, to inspect his features more closely. He would fain have slipped away, but besides the steady grasp of the strong hand, something in the traveller’s sunburnt face attracted him ; and he stood patiently, blushing even above the glow of the frost and the fire.

‘Have *you* ever travelled, my pretty boy ?’ asked Mr. Randolph.

‘Yes, sir, but please don’t call me a pretty boy, as if I was a baby.’

‘I beg your pardon, Mr. Walter Lyndon. Where have you travelled, may I ask ?’

‘Why, in India, of course ; and I came over with mamma and Brown John, all round the Cape.’

‘And who is Brown John?’

‘Oh! don’t you know? He was poor papa’s native servant—so clever, and so funny. He knew *such* odd tricks, and frightened silly people out of their wits, you know. *I* was never frightened, but the people here were. He had a little cottage here all to himself; and we were so fond of Brown John, were we not, Sophy?’

‘Very,’ Sophy assented: but owned also, that he frightened *her* at first with his strange tricks, and Colly had told her several of the people thought him a magician.

‘Poor old John!’ said Dr. Home; ‘he was a fine Oriental specimen, Maurice, and died, I trust, a sincere Christian; but his dark skin and sleight-of-hand were too much for some of our rustics, and now the poor faithful fellow is dead, they will not pass his grave by night if they can help it. I do believe they looked upon him as a Doctor Faustus at least, if not worse. I convinced some of the more sensible ones of their folly, but I am ashamed to own, all my wisdom has failed with others. The march of education is but a one-legged affair down here, Maurice. I assure you they didn’t half like the poor native being such a favourite with his mistress, and this youngster being allowed to play with him. I had the greatest respect for Brown John; he showed great courage and fidelity to his master and mistress in India, and I was very fond of making him talk, when he would, of his perils and escapes. Ah! Walter, how he used to speak of your mamma!’

‘I should think so,’ said the boy; ‘and that is why *some* people could not bear him. Nothing makes *somebody* more cross than to be asked about the brave way mamma behaved in India, and all that: and don’t I take care to bring it in somehow when anybody is by!’

‘You are a very saucy lad,’ said Dr. Home, ‘and it is high time you went to school. Meanwhile, you must run home, or your mamma will be uneasy; and she has had quite enough anxiety in her life already, without giving her any more.’

‘Oh, do let Colly see him safe home!’ cried Sophy, to Walter’s intense indignation. He require anybody to take care of him, indeed! what next? He thought Sophy had more sense, but women were all alike, except his mamma.

‘Let him go,’ said the old rector; ‘I’ll be bound no one touches him any more. But hark ye, my fine fellow, don’t go playing with those lads again; they are not fit comrades for you.’

‘I don’t want to play with them, not I,’ said Walter; ‘I was walking with Bob Grayling, and I asked him if he knew anything about ice and snow—how they come, you know, and all that; and he didn’t,’ continued the young philosopher, buttoning his coat with an air of pitying superiority.

‘And as you *did*, sir, I suppose you explained it to him?’

‘Well, I began; but people are so stupid, there is no doing anything with them, and he declared that I did not know what I was talking about, and it was just like a pastrycook, to know how to make ice—so like him! He is always thinking of eating and stuffing: and I know what happened to him on Christmas-day, when he had three——’

‘There, never mind Bob Grayling’s little weaknesses; tell us what that had to do with your snowballing.’

‘Why, Doctor Home, just as I was repeating to him, as plainly as I could, all about it—and how mamma herself had helped to make ice with an air-pump—don’t you remember her telling us, Sophy, how she burnt her dress with the acid?—just as I was telling him this, there came a great roar of laughter behind us, and there were those fellows who had been listening all the while. They were very impudent, and asked if they might come and see me pumping snow some day, making game of me, you know; and I just told them they were a lot of ninnies for their pains, and then they got angry, and Bob ran away.’

‘Well, and what did you do?’

‘Why, I reasoned with them,’ said Walter, gravely, ‘and told them mamma knew all about it, and she had seen it herself, and anybody could make ice who had the proper apparatus; and Joe Steadiman said it was very wicked to say so, because only God could make it: and he supposed I had learned that from Sergeant Wade, the unbeliever, that my lady was so fond of visiting. I felt very angry at this, and I said it was much more wicked to slander their neighbours, and mamma said so. Then they began to hoot at me, all but Joe, who walked off; and Stephen said, as I was so clever at making ice and snow, I should have plenty; he knew what Betty Fell told his mother, and he supposed it was one of Brown John’s conjuring tricks, and they all began to abuse Brown John, and Sergeant Wade, and mamma and me, and then they took to the snowballing, and I ran, and they after me.’

‘I see,’ said Dr. Home, who had listened very attentively to this eloquent description; ‘but what was that about Betty Fell? Did I not hear you had played her some trick, and made her leave her situation?’

‘Oh, it was really nothing, Dr. Home! only she was always prying about, pretending to be putting to rights, and I know she meddled with mamma’s things, though she was told not; and I had read about phosphorus in a story-book at home, and mamma had given me a bit, so I wrote up on a dark wall, “Betty peeps,” and when she saw it, she ran away screeching, and gave warning directly.’

‘I say,’ said the old gentleman, turning to Randolph, who looked much amused, ‘what are we to do with this young Friar Bacon? First he scares a harmless housemaid out of her five wits, and then he harangues a village mob on natural philosophy with the thermometer at 15° below freezing. Phosphorus indeed! and his mamma allowing it! Things are coming to a pretty pass. Wisely said the poet, “A little knowledge is a dangerous thing!” I guessed there was something of the kind in Betty’s sudden departure, by what your aunt said; and Betty is cousin to Stephen’s mother, one of the most ignorant bodies in the parish, and has told her, no doubt, that Brown John’s ghost haunts the dark passages of the Manor-house, like the lady in the tapestried chamber. Well, away with you, Walter; it is with you as that fellow says that your mother is so fond of,

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers.

When you know more, you will make better use of it. My compliments to your grandfather, and as my friend Mr. Randolph is staying with me, he must excuse me this evening. Be off with you, and get wiser as fast as you can.’

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## CHAPTER II.

A weary lot is thine, fair maid,  
A weary lot is thine!  
To pull the thorn thy brow to braid,  
And press the rue for wine.—*Walter Scott.*

WALTER sped manfully home, brimful of his adventures, and proud of his own intrepidity in braving the unseen enemies that might be lurking behind every steep snowbank, to overwhelm him with the tempting missiles. The rector’s opinion proved correct: no one molested him on the way, and he was safe at home in ten minutes.

A gloomy home it was, it must be confessed, as far as outward appearances went. A red-brick house, with deep embrasured windows, and low ceilings; dark old-fashioned furniture, sombre passages, and an indescribable heaviness in the atmosphere, redolent of ancient closets, stuff curtains, dried leaves, skins preserved in patchouli—walls whose paper had been unrenewed for nearly a century—Turkey carpeting whose date and colour were equally mystical—and above all, the constant presence of ladies who preferred scents to fresh air. One of these met Walter as he opened the hall door.

‘My dear boy, how very wrong it is to be out so late! What have you been doing? Now if you catch cold being out in the



now, don't come complaining and fussing to me—I am not responsible, and so I shall tell your mamma.'

'You have often told her so, already, aunt Penny, and she does not care, nor do I.'

'You are extremely rude and naughty, Walter! I shall tell your grandpapa how you behave.'

'Then won't I tell him something you said yesterday! I say, mamma!' as a handsome lady in black entered the hall, 'what do you think I heard aunt Pen, when she thought I was out of the room, telling Miss Sweetman and Miss Chatterley about your——'

His aunt was too quick for him; her hand came smartly over his face and mouth, making them tingle again.

'You *dare*, sir, repeat what you overheard in that mean way! Your mamma may think it all right—I dare say she does—but in *our* family such behaviour would be called shameful!'

He looked up eagerly in his mother's beautiful face; it was grave, almost stern.

'Your aunt is perfectly right, Walter; nothing is more contemptible than gossip and tale-bearing. I am ashamed of you.'

The boy's face grew scarlet; his eyes filled; and flinging down his cap and coat, he rushed upstairs.

Then the ladies looked at each other.

'I am very glad you at last see the necessity of correcting him, spoiled as he has been,' said Miss Penelope.

'I am very sorry you should have troubled yourself to undertake the correction,' said Lady Adelaide. 'In future, be so good as to leave him to me.'

'A pretty obedient boy *you* will make of him!'

'He has always obeyed *me*—he always will.'

'Oh! you think so, do you? Wait till you thwart his inclinations, and see if he does not turn as restive to you as he does to everybody else; unless, indeed, he inherits obedience, like all the other virtues, by right of descent.'

The handsome face of Lady Adelaide grew dark with resentment and scorn; but without answering, she stooped to pick up Walter's cap and coat, which he had left, as usual, in the middle of the hall.

'Ah,' went on Miss Lyndon, still too wrathful to refrain, 'I wonder you let that child racket about wherever he pleases. You know you are not popular among the people, and I should never be surprised to hear that some of them had teased him, just to annoy you.'

'It is an easy and safe method of annoyance, I admit,' said Lady Adelaide, drily; 'but one I am growing accustomed to.'

'Oh! you mean me—you are affronted because I made him

hold his tongue just now. Really, he might have told you all that was said, for what I care; it was his impertinence I could not stand. Lavinia Sweetman was saying how much they wished you would be more sociable and neighbourly, and Susan Chatterley wondered what you thought good enough for you, or something of that sort—you know her way of rattling on—and they both wished it could be explained to those who have remarked upon it, that you were only shy, and not so proud and overbearing as they supposed; and I believe I tried to turn it off as a joke. I forget what I said. It was only what I had heard fifty times, and told you of when I did hear it. You may depend on my always doing so.'

'Thank you,' said Lady Adelaide.

'It was very natural the poor souls should be affronted; you must feel that. So attentive and proper as they always are to us, and so full of respect for our family, it must mortify and displease them to be met always with a proud look, and a short answer, and a curtsy that begs them to keep their distance. I am sure that when they complain to me that her ladyship is so dreadfully high and mighty there is no speaking to her, I can only say I am sorry for it. I am convinced, so strong is the general feeling, that if it were not for respect for my father and regard for me, you would soon find nobody would speak to you.'

'That is all I ask of them,' said Lady Adelaide, wearily.

'Yes, that is very pretty talking, but you would not like it when it came to the point. Why, even now you are so disliked, and such stories are spread about you, that the workpeople hate your very name, Mrs. Grayling says——'

'Mrs. Grayling is very good to come and bring such pleasant information. Unfortunately, it cannot be true.'

'Why not, pray?'

'I have never had anything to do with the people, and I question whether they ever think of me at all.'

'That is just what they say. You never do anything for them, you never visit anybody, except, from sheer perverseness, that cross-grained old sergeant, whom everybody else avoids, and who bears the worst character in the parish.'

'Am I accountable to Mrs. Grayling and Miss Chatterley for the acquaintances I make?'

'No; nonsense—of course not; but I only say people cannot help noticing these things, and they will make their remarks. You take no part in any of our charitable arrangements: the people might die before you would condescend to look after them—and, of course, they don't like you. I should be sorry, I know, to have such things said of me as are said of you.'

'And to whom am I indebted for this amiable character? To Mrs. Grayling?'

'Oh, no—I have heard it from different quarters; but don't let it vex you, my dear. People *will* talk, you know.'

'They *will*,' said Lady Adelaide. 'Sooner than be silent, they will repeat, carry, or invent foolish remarks, to make other people uncomfortable, if they can; no one would think of being vexed by such nonsense.'

Miss Lyndon coughed, but had no time to retort, as her father's voice that moment peremptorily summoned them both to the drawing-room.

Mr. Lyndon was a thin, withered-looking, wiry man, nearly bald, with a restless, impatient eye, and imperious manner; the autocrat of his house, and acknowledged dictator of his neighbourhood; whose chief anxiety since he attained the dignity of 'the Squire,' had been to keep everybody in mind of the fact. In proportion to his want of real power, was the vigorous use he made of what he had; and power is one of those accommodating things of which we can truly say, that a little will go a great way.

'Why, Adelaide, my dear, what *is* all this? Walter tells me he has been mobbed, insulted, knocked down, and I don't know what besides, by a parcel of ragamuffins, and was rescued by a strange visitor of Dr. Home's; and the Doctor, on account of his visitor, cannot be here this evening. Hang the visitor—and the ragamuffins too! You must really look after the child a little more, my dear; you must indeed. I am not going to have my heir exposed to this sort of thing, I assure you! If you are not competent—your health, and so forth—I must see about a resident tutor; I must indeed.'

'You never told me this, Walter,' said his mother; 'are you hurt?'

'No, mamma, not a bit.'

'No, he is not hurt, I soon ascertained that; but that has nothing to do with it. He might have been killed, for all you knew. I am really surprised, my dear Adelaide, that you are not more careful of him.'

A caress of her boy was Lady Adelaide's only reply; but Walter keenly resented the idea of not being able to take care of himself. He protested that grandpapa was as bad as Sophy Home, who wanted Colly to walk back with him; the boys were only a set of donkeys (to use no stronger term), who wouldn't believe anybody who knew more than themselves; he only wished he was big enough to give them a good licking for the impertinent things they said of his mamma. At this point he was interrupted by the triumphant exclamation of Miss Penelope. 'There! I thought as much—and I said so!'

'Of your mamma, Walter? what do you mean?' cried Mr. Lyndon.

'Why, grandpapa, it was only stuff, after all; but when I told them mamma knew how ice could be made in a pump—I mean an air-pump, of course—they abused me and her too, and said it was wicked, and a conjuring trick, and I don't know what. But Dr. Home thinks it was my fault for frightening Betty,' added Walter bravely.

'Of course,' said Miss Penny, 'I could have told you that at the time; it is wrong, and dangerous, and foolish to go on as you do, and as your mamma allows you to do, meddling with those horrid chemical things or whatever you call them, and frightening everybody out of their senses. And as to the things the boys said, it is only what I knew it would come to.'

'What do you mean by that?' cried Mr. Lyndon, angrily; 'I cannot conceive what you are talking about, Penny! What on earth has my grandson's trying experiments to do with the young rascals out of doors? He is not to ask their permission, I hope?'

'Oh dear, no! you mistake me, papa, entirely. I only mean this has evidently been done to spite dear Adelaide; and as I was telling her just now, her shyness and reserve have been misunderstood by some of our neighbours, and she has made herself unpopular with the common people; there is no concealing the fact, and I am very sorry for it.'

'Why, Adelaide,' said Mr. Lyndon, turning hastily to her, 'what do you say to this?'

'I have nothing to say, sir; it appears to me beneath your notice, or mine.'

'But I don't understand—whom have you been quarrelling with—why are you unpopular? *you*, the mother of my heir, who ought to be looked up to by everybody? I say, *why* is it, if it be so?'

'Do you hold me responsible, sir, for every caprice your neighbours may take into their heads?'

'It is not caprice,' said Miss Penny, sharply; 'I have seen it a long time, and I told you so.'

'You hear, sir,' said Lady Adelaide. 'Penelope understands the whole story, and can explain it, if I cannot.'

'I don't want any explanations: I don't want to hear the impertinent remarks people choose to make to Penelope, and which I am surprised she listens to. What I say is this—and you know when I say a thing I mean it—I shall put a stop to any insolence among the cottagers at once; and as to the neighbours, who have always hitherto behaved to us with respect, I expect that you, Penny, take care to explain properly any misunderstandings that have come about; and that you, Adelaide, exert yourself a *little* more to be agreeable, as

you know you can be when you please, and let me hear no more nonsense about your not being popular. I am really astonished at the boldness of the people—quite astonished.'

The announcement of the five o'clock dinner (such old-world fashions had Cannymoor!) interrupted this discussion; and Mr. Lyndon flattered himself he had settled it all in a masterly manner. While the family, therefore, are proceeding, almost in silence, with this necessary duty, we may just obtain an insight into the number of members composing it, and the relation wherein they stood to one another.

As Bob the driver had informed Mr. Randolph, Mrs. Lyndon, who was several years her husband's senior, had fallen into a state of helpless childishness;—quiet, gentle, and easily amused, the concerns of life passed her unheeded, and her sway had long since devolved on her energetic eldest daughter, Penelope. Miss Lucy Lyndon, the second, having spent her life and intellects in a fruitless struggle against her sister's yoke, whereby the whole of her ideas had become entangled beyond remedy, had at length been reduced to a repining subjection; and yielded, though under protest, the tribute to Penelope's despotism which that vigorous authority claimed from all within its range.

As second in command to her father, no one was exempt—kindred, servants, friends and neighbours, all alike bowed before Miss Lyndon's fiat, till the arrival of her widowed sister-in-law to be a resident in their house, and dispute her dominion over all she surveyed.

The marriage of Walter Lyndon with the Earl Delaunay's sister had had its day of glory in Cannymoor; the whole place feeling that a ray of aristocratic dignity had thereby been shed upon it: but as the bridegroom's regiment was on the point of departure for India, the curiosity of those who were longing for a sight of the bride, was fain to be satisfied with such descriptions as Miss Lyndon transferred to them from her brother's letters. So long as she was yet unknown, 'my sister-in-law, Lady Adelaide,' was a considerable favourite, and was brought forward with wonderful effect, whenever it was necessary to make an impression on the audience; so that it was quite the fashion in Cannymoor to consider them the dearest and most united friends in the world. But when, some months after poor Walter's death, his widow and child came to make his home their own, it was soon but too palpable that fashion, as she often is, was mistaken.

The society of Cannymoor (with all respect be it spoken) was not of the highest order in point of birth, nor of the profoundest depth in point of intellect: but of this they were happily unconscious, and naturally concluded it must be as great an event to the fair stranger

to be received among them, as it was to themselves to sit in the same room with the daughter of a dead earl, and the sister of a living one. Her rank, her beauty, and the interest excited by her sorrows, raised the enthusiasm of the whole neighbourhood; and Miss Penelope, who had reigned so long supreme, found herself on the point of sinking into comparative insignificance. The consequence was, that a keen jealousy of her sister-in-law speedily took place of the sympathy and goodwill she had felt for her at first: and most energetically did she set to work to re-establish her tottering empire, and teach this formidable rival her proper place. The former was easier than the latter; the manner in which Lady Adelaide, when her period of seclusion was over, received the flattering homage of her new acquaintances—a manner that in its quiet grace left nobody word of complaint to make, and yet as plainly as pride could speak, told them she was not of them, and never could be—effectually damped the glow of her first popularity.

Then, as it gradually revealed itself to their minds, that she had no taste for any of their favourite topics of conversation; that she preferred the dry dull books in Dr. Home's study to the choicest volumes in the Reading Club; that she declined tea-parties, took long, difficult walks all over the country, instead of dropping in for a little chat first with one neighbour, then with another—the amount of bodily exercise favoured in Cannymoor; that she taught her boy all his lessons, including Latin (some even whispered Greek, but that was too dreadful), encouraged him in all sorts of horrid dangerous tricks, of which he, as we have seen, took care to boast pretty freely—the predominant feeling towards 'my lady' became one of undefined dread and dislike: and all hearts turned back to Miss Penelope with a warmth of devotion, heightened by a little remorse.

Miss Penelope was in no hurry to remove this impression: she had a happy way of saying disagreeable things, and she dispensed a few to her good neighbours with a graciousness that showed them they were on the same friendly terms as ever. That her brother's widow held them all but in slight estimation, she attempted not to conceal; rather the reverse: any lingering loyalty towards the earl's daughter that might have survived her indifference, was in a fair way of being eradicated by the stories of her pride and other evil qualities, that became Miss Lyndon's favourite confidence with her friends. And this state of things having gone on now for the best part of three years, might be considered as established beyond the risk of any reaction.

In dealing with her sister-in-law in person, Miss Lyndon had a harder task. Possibly she might have set about it in a better way—possibly it had been wiser in Lady Adelaide to have met it differently: but where one was determined to subdue, and the other

had never been subdued in her life, it was Greek meeting Greek, and the tug of war became a heavy strain on the bands of relationship. Would Adelaide but have submitted herself, have given up her tastes, her friendships, and her affairs to Penelope's guidance. Penelope would have forgiven her everything—forgiven her for being younger, handsomer, better born and bred, and educated than herself; forgiven her what was almost worse, for being what she undeniably was, poor—and might, from the very fact of being able to patronize and direct her, have become her zealous, sympathizing friend. But Adelaide never would be patronized, could scarcely be sympathized with; for to obtain sympathy at Cannymoor it was necessary to talk of your troubles, and Coriolanus himself was not more averse to winning voices by a display of wounds. Whatever hers were—a widow of eight-and-twenty—and no one could look upon her pale, resolute face, without seeing it had passed through scenes from which few come off unscathed—she kept her mantle wrapped over them, and seemed determined not to let them wear her down. By study, by active exercise, by constant employment, she fought against melancholy, and endeavoured to supply the resources which were cut off elsewhere. As for the people of Cannymoor, of whom Penelope had given her a distaste before she saw them, by her peremptory advice to receive them cordially, their manners and habits offended her taste, and she saw no reason for cultivating their good opinion. She was told over and over again she was unpopular, and treated the intelligence with indifference, because it was Penelope who had said it; but it had the effect of increasing her distant reserve, and deepening her dislike to the place she was doomed to live in. Then, as all the charitable doings of the place were shared among the ladies, and no one could do anything that was not known to everybody, and discussed at committees and meetings, and friendly tea-drinkings, the report soon became spread that my lady was so proud and grand she would not visit the poor, or the schools, or join the working society, or care for her distressed neighbours at all. She would go and sit with her Indian servant in his illness, to be sure—that horrid brown fellow with the black eyebrows and white turban—and she visited *one* person besides, certainly, just out of the spirit of perverseness, because nobody else did!—that crabbed old sergeant who never went to church, or would let anybody give him a tract, or read or advise him, or anything. Yes, she pretended to like him, because he had made friends with Brown John! Such nonsense! when everybody knew it was only out of the spirit of contradiction, which, as dear Miss Lyndon remarked herself, seemed to govern everything she said and did.

All this, however, was kept as much as possible from Mr. Lyndon's observation, whose dignity would have been highly

offended if any one had told him how his daughter-in-law was canvassed and criticised. He was partial to her himself, proud of her abilities and elegance, and, in his secret soul, of her rank; and that so distinguished a member of his family should meet with anything but respect and consideration never entered his head till to-day. The more he thought over the affront, the more angry he grew, and the less disposed to forgive anybody who could, in his opinion, have prevented it.

The ladies saw his mood, and the dinner, as we observed, passed chiefly in silence. When, however, they were established in the drawing-room, and the tea was in progress, he suddenly addressed Walter, who was preparing his lessons for the next day.

‘What was the name of Dr. Home’s friend?’

‘Randolph, grandpapa—*amabam, amabas, amabat*—bother this love, what stuff it is!’

‘Randolph? I don’t know the name. Do you know, Penny? do you, Adelaide?’

They both replied in the negative.

‘Is he gentlemanly, Walter?’ asked Miss Penelope.

‘Very brown,’ said Walter. ‘*I* like him—perhaps you won’t—but then I like sensible people. And he did tumble the boys over in such a jolly way!’

‘And a pretty thing for a stranger to do on his first appearance among us!’ said Mr. Lyndon, angrily; ‘enough to make him suppose there was really no respect or honour shown in the place. It is exceedingly annoying to *me*; none of you mind it, of course, but *I* do, and I shall take immediate steps to prevent its happening again. I shall call on Mr. Randolph to-morrow, and ask him here: and, Penelope, you must invite our friends to meet him, and we will endeavour to show him in what light our family is really looked upon in society. My grandson—a Lyndon—the heir of my name and property, to be so treated in the presence of a stranger! It is unpardonable, and I blame you both, I must say, for its having happened at all.’

‘Well now, really,’ put in Miss Lucy, hesitating, ‘I do think, sir, it is rather hard to blame poor dear Adelaide, who of course would be liked and admired, and all that, if she could—I mean, who could be if she liked—no, I don’t mean that, I am sure, Adelaide; I beg your pardon: but is it not hard that it should be your fault, you know?’

‘What is my fault?’ asked Lady Adelaide.

‘Oh! not *fault*, exactly—but all this—Walter’s snowballs—Mr. Randolph—people talking—you can’t help it, if they think you unpleasant, can you? Penny won’t mind when I say so, but *I* do say it is hard, and not fair at all.’



'I don't know what you are talking about,' said Penelope, sharply; 'you had better get out the card-table: you do understand something about that.'

'Not much,' observed Mr. Lyndon. 'Come, Adelaide, my dear, we must be partners again, in spite of our quarrel last time.'

'Do you really want me to-night?' asked Adelaide, with a wistful glance at her boy and his books.

'Oh dear no, if not agreeable to yourself—the last thing I should ask for. Put back the table, Lucy—put it back; I do not want to be a tax on anybody's time, I am sure. We shall not play to-night, Lucy, at all, thank you.'

His face looked white with suppressed irritability: Penelope looked at Lucy, and shrugged her shoulders: Lady Adelaide, colouring deeply, went up to him, and laid her hand on his shoulder. 'To oblige me, sir, I think you will.'

'My dear Adelaide, I thank you most sincerely, but really, I should be sorry to take up your time simply for my amusement. It must, of course, be a great strain on your complaisance, and I hate to see people do a thing as a favour. Pray sit down again, and amuse yourself as you like best.'

But Adelaide stood still, and would not be repulsed. 'I can hardly believe, dear sir, that you are angry with me in earnest.'

'Angry! who said I was angry?' But looking up, and seeing her really distressed, his mood relaxed. 'I am not at all angry: how could I be so with *you*? I should never forgive myself if I was—I promised I never would be: in his last letter he begged me to be a father to you, Adelaide, and so I always have been, and always will. You went through enough for his sake to make you dear to us all, you did—poor, poor Walter!'

'*Walter!*' repeated a feeble voice, 'is he not come back yet?'

They all looked round with a start. Mrs. Lyndon, in her arm-chair by the fire, where she generally sat knitting in silence, had laid down her work, and turned her face towards her husband, whose exclamation had roused her dormant recollections.

'Is the boy not come back yet, John? He promised I should see him in his uniform—I am afraid they won't make it to fit. Is he not come?'

Penelope stepped briskly up to her mother, and began changing her pillows.

'Oh dear, no, mamma! nobody can come this weather, you know; and we have got Adelaide here, and little Walter, and we are all as happy and merry as the day is long, don't you know? Are we not, Lucy?'—(aside) 'Answer quick, can't you, child? Don't look so stupid, as if you had no sense!'

‘Well, really, Pen dear, to speak the honest truth, I don’t seem to think we *are* particularly happy and merry with Adelaide and Walter—I don’t mean to say it is their fault—I’m sure, Adelaide, I do not wish to be rude, but you know one is not always in the humour to be good-humoured. It is nobody’s fault, I am sure.’

‘What is Lucy talking about, Pen? Lucy always would talk, she is a giddy little thing. You must look after her, Pen.’

‘I do, mamma’—(aside) ‘much use it is, too!’

‘But I want Walter, Pen; why does he not come when he promised? O now, I forgot—yes, and his pretty young wife is to come and stay with us, is she not? A sweet-looking creature, everybody says, is she not, Pen?’

‘Very, ma’am,’ said Penelope, drily.

‘Ah, yes, I know she is; she is always good to me, poor silly old thing that I am. She is a dear creature, Penny! you must take great care of her, that Walter may find her looking well when he comes.’

The tears stood in Miss Penny’s eyes; she was of hard materials, but not adamant all through. Mr. Lyndon walked up and down the room; Lady Adelaide stood leaning on the back of a chair in sorrowful silence.

‘I shall soon have done his quilt, Penny; I always was a quick knitter, you know, and it must be got up and well aired; you must take care of that, Penny: you are a handy girl, and always were, only too quick tempered. Break yourself of that, my dear Penny, and do pick up my cotton. You should always remember—oh, dear! I don’t know what I am talking about—I am growing very silly, aint I, dear? and Walter will think I don’t look after his pretty wife—where is she?’

‘Here, dear mother,’ said Lady Adelaide, bending over her.

‘Ah! is that you, my love? When did you come? and I hope you left all well at home. Your own dear mother, how is she?’

Lady Adelaide trembled violently; her voice was choked with weeping. She sank on her knee by Mrs. Lyndon’s chair, and kissed the withered hand that held her own, and on which her tears fell fast. Penelope eyed her thoughtfully with a kind of grim compassion, and when the old lady looked up again, and stroking her daughter-in-law’s dark hair, repeated in a coaxing tone, ‘You’ll take care of her, poor young thing, and help her, won’t you, Pen?’ could not help answering, in a tone meant to be conciliatory,

‘Yes, yes, ma’am, I’ll do the best I can for her; I say, Adelaide, my dear, don’t!’

Ashamed of her want of self-command, Lady Adelaide raised

her head, and dashed away her tears ; but Lucy, to whom anything of the sort was perilously contagious, broke out into a burst of piteous lamentation that roused Mr. Lyndon's wrath. Always most irritable when excited and nervous, it was a real relief to his feelings to vent them on somebody, and his distress at this scene took the form of very pungent remarks on the weakness of giving way and making displays of sensibility on every occasion—really, if there was to be any chance of living quietly in this world, people ought to practise a little self-control.

This had the desired effect, and the poor old lady, after maundering on for a little while longer about Walter's guilt, and his uniform, and his pretty young wife, gradually subsided into quietness, and then into a doze.

'I have never seen her so excited before,' whispered Adelaide, as they stood watching her.

'She must have heard us talking of that child's adventure,' said Penelope, in the same tone, 'and it set her poor dear head working. But you should never mind what she says—it only upsets my father, you see——'

'I am very sorry,' said Lady Adelaide, in a tone of sincere apology ; submitting to the rebuke for the sake of the sympathy that had preceded it. Her look appeased Mr. Lyndon, and after a little hesitation, he graciously renewed his proposal of a rubber, which, sick at heart as she was, she took good care this time not to reject.

This evening amusement, which, according to the attending circumstances, may be either a very agreeable one, or very much the reverse, was the nightly torment and terror of her life ; for it hardly ever failed to cause an amount of heat and irritability on the part of two, at least, of the players, to which no repetition could inure her. At this moment it felt more irksome than usual, and a sigh of impatient weariness as she took her place, brought a significant exchange of glances between her sisters-in-law. Miss Penny hailed it as an excellent omen ; it made all the difference in the world to herself and her partner ; for if their respective powers had been estimated, taking Lucy as the unit 1, it would have appeared that Penelope stood as 5, Adelaide, when she played her best, as 4, Mr. Lyndon as 3 ; leaving a balance of 1 in favour of the two latter. Any preoccupation of mind was apt to reduce Adelaide as low as 2, and by its ruffling effect on her partner, bring him down, nobody could 'calculate where ; defeat and humiliation the inevitable consequence.

Mr. Lyndon was pretty well aware of this himself, and it was with some anxiety that he watched the beautiful face of his daughter-in-law, which, though it had now regained its usual com-

posure, looked much too abstracted to promise well for success. He addressed her in his most winning tones.

‘Now, Adelaide, my dear, we will show them what a little good play is; you and I didn’t learn of Conway for nothing.’

This was a favourite allusion to a great-uncle of hers, at whose house much of her youth had been spent, and whose abilities as a soldier, whatever their merits, were lost sight of by posterity in the fame that he had acquired as a whist-player—a Bonaparte in his way, of whose best days marvels were told, whose traditions yet ranked as history among zealots of the game.

The prestige of his reputation clung to his niece, whether she liked it or not, and in spite of all she was constantly doing to overthrow it. Nothing could ever convince Mr. Lyndon that any one who had been in the general’s house could be anything but an enthusiast in his favourite pursuit. It was his special compliment to his daughter-in-law, when he meant to show her extra politeness and encouragement, and he was glad to see that the mention of the name startled her from her reverie.

‘What would I not give,’ he continued, as he shuffled his cards with his usual care, ‘for a fifth of the opportunities you must have had, my love! How much you must have learnt merely by looking on!’

She shook her head with a faint smile; her recollections of that period were not exactly what he supposed.

‘Dear me, papa,’ cried Penelope, ‘do you imagine Adelaide had nothing else to do at General Conway’s than to play cards? You forget she was learning all the dead languages, and all the living mischiefs that were ever invented; witness the wonderful education Walter is receiving, of which we have to-day reaped the benefit. The general’s house was a temple of science, was it not, Adelaide? Had you not a whole college of instructors there to bring your mind into proper cultivation—as the correct term is now?’

‘I had only one there,’ said Lady Adelaide, who never could be brought without reluctance to speak of her former life.

‘And did you let him teach you Latin, mamma?’ called out Walter from his distant table.

‘Yes, sir; how is it you are attending to us instead of to your work?’

‘No, mamma:—I mean, I am attending; but I could not help wondering how anybody could learn such horrid stuff unless they were obliged. How you must have detested the man!’

‘I had no cause, Walter,’ she said; but her brow knit, as if pained by the remembrance.

‘Was he a relation of yours?’ asked Penelope, eyeing her curiously.

'No—he was my uncle's private secretary.'

'And entrusted with your education—rash, was it not? There, no offence, my dear; you need not blush so; bless me, one must measure one's words as if they had treason in them. I only meant, that *when* you were young and handsome, his risk might have been worth considering.'

'That is so long ago now,' said Lady Adelaide, good-humouredly, though with an effort that showed the subject pained her, 'that we need not speculate on what might or might not have happened.'

But their curiosity being now excited, they began to ply her with questions, which her utmost skill in giving short answers was not sufficient effectually to parry; so that they ascertained that the private secretary was a gentleman of birth and breeding, exceedingly clever and agreeable, poor, young, and highly esteemed by the general; and then came the inquiry, 'What became of him?'

She did not know.

'Did he leave the general?'

'Yes.'

'While you were there?'

'Yes.'

'Why?'

Lady Adelaide looked across the table at her partner. 'Are you ready, sir?'

'Ready! I should think so, when all this chattering is over. Come, Penelope, you are only trying to put off the evil moment; take leave of your sixpences, for you won't see them again.'

Luckless was the speech, and bootless the boast; Lady Adelaide had never held such bad cards, nor shown so little energy in making the best of them. On the strength of his good resolutions, Mr. Lyndon endured the two first deals with grim resignation; but the tide of ill-fortune setting in stronger than usual, his patience gave way after the third.

'How infamously you and Lucy played that last hand!' was his complimentary remark to the victorious Penelope.

'How can you say so, my dear father? We won the trick.'

'Won the trick—if you had an ounce of sense, you would have won three tricks. My partner gave you the game—forced it into your hands, as it were; you could not help getting everything; a baby in arms could not help it! Adelaide gives her cards away—positively gives them away!'

'Small generosity to give what she cannot keep,' said Lady Adelaide.

'I don't know anything about generosity, I never heard of it in whist before; I only know *facts*, and that Walter there would have had more sense than to lead out spades when you did. And as for

Lucy, I suppose her partner admires her style, so I have no right to complain ; but such egregious ignorance of the commonest rules of play I never could have believed in, never ! I would rather people sit with their hands before them, than that they should attempt what they cannot do with ordinary chance of not being ridiculous.'

A worm will turn when trodden upon ; and Lucy could not stand this.

'Oh, sir, I *did* play—now didn't I, Adelaide?—didn't I trump your queen? No, you took mine—how was it? I always forget what has been played, but I know I trumped something.'

'You trumped my best heart,' growled Penelope.

'So I did ! of course, or ought I not to? You always tell me to make tricks, and I never can remember when I should and when I shouldn't : but did not I play better than usual now, Adelaide?'

'I dare say you did, my dear ; you might easily do that,' said Adelaide, serenely.

Mr. Lyndon gave a grim smile, and shuffled the cards.

'Walter, your mother and I are nearly ruined ! A little more of her good play, and I shall have to sell your inheritance, my boy !'

'And old Spindler will buy it, of course,' returned Walter, looking up from his Latin, 'and then he will be lord of the manor in earnest ; I know he thinks himself nearly as good already—Bob Grayling told me so.'

It was now Mr. Lyndon's turn to grow red, while his breast heaved with indignation. 'He may think himself what he pleases, and Bob Grayling may say what he pleases ; I have not the slightest objection—none in the world. The very idea is so preposterous, it is not likely it should have occurred to him ; a respectable civil neighbour as he has been so long, I should be sorry to see him placed in any position to make him ridiculous. So if you please, Walter, not to make a joke of anything so intensely revolting to common sense and propriety. Mr. Spindler is a most worthy man, and because he has invested his money for the present in the Lyndon lands, that is no reason why he should be laughed at. Yes, you may look saucily at your mother, sir—as saucily as you please. You are not master here yet, I will have you remember ; and though your mamma may allow this behaviour, I don't !'

'Walter !' said his mother, holding up her finger. His head dropped over his grammar directly ; only emerging again when nobody was looking, to make a grimace of intense rebellion at his grandfather, who had now returned to his game. His irritability was so rapidly increasing, the emergency quickened his partner's zeal, and she compelled herself to more attention. They played old-fashioned long whist ; the game got to a critical point ; a slip or two from Lucy having altered the relative position of the com-

batants, the interest grew exciting: three out of the four faces grew as passionately eager as if hundreds had been at stake, and their skill suffered in proportion. All depended on one trick; Mr. Lyndon, in his anxiety, played the card he did not intend; Lucy, in her hurry to profit by it, threw away another; Lady Adelaide brought out a trump, that (to their shame be it spoken) nobody dreamt of—and won the game.

‘Hurrah!’ cried Mr. Lyndon, and starting from his chair, nearly overturned the table: the cards were scattered, and the candles saved with difficulty. ‘I really beg your pardon, my dears,’ said he, in the liveliest spirits; ‘but a victory like that with every earthly chance against us!—you played superbly, my dear Adelaide—magnificently! I do not know if that was some of the private secretary’s teaching, but it was a Conway stroke, all over.’

‘I am not so sure at all!’ cried Penelope, mightily vexed; ‘I do not understand about that heart; I cannot imagine how it was, unless there was a revoke. It *must* have been a revoke. Let us see the tricks.’

But the cards had got mixed in their fall, and investigation came too late. Lucy was appealed to; she dared to say it was, but Adelaide didn’t mean to, she was sure—such mistakes would occur—it had occurred to herself sometimes. Mr. Lyndon furiously repudiated the charge against his partner; he tried to recall the cards that had been played, so as to disprove it; Miss Penny disputed his assertions; they grew warm, hot, irate in the argument; till Lucy shed tears, and the poor old lady woke up in a flutter, to ask if it was morning?

Lady Adelaide, already out of spirits, fiercely appealed to by both parties, and satisfying neither, retired to her arm-chair by her boy’s side for comfort. His badly-written exercise, and slate all over smears and soldiers, were often her best refreshment. But even these failed to cheer just now; she was fretted beyond her powers of endurance, and the louder the voices grew, the more expressive became her look of vexation; till it drew forth at last such indignant comments, that she was glad to tell Walter his bedtime was come, and make it an excuse for leaving the room.

This was her hour of respite, and neither she nor Walter would ever relinquish it to anybody. It was the season of confidence to which they, by mutual consent, postponed all such expressions and feelings as were too interesting for public observation. Walter might be sleepy over his lessons, but he was never too sleepy to chat with his mamma, to read a psalm with her, and to repeat his evening prayer. She was all his own at these moments—all softness, tenderness, and indulgence; never looked severe, or gave dry

answers, as she did downstairs, but smiled at him, and listened to him, and always bent over him after he was in bed, for a last kiss, looking so beautiful that, as he told Sophy Home in confidence, he never could marry anybody, because nobody could ever be a bit like his own mamma. To which Sophy's complimentary answer was, that it was not very likely that anybody like his beautiful mamma would think of marrying a conceited little bit of a monkey like *him*.

Now if anything fidgeted the rest of the family, it was this bedtime of Walter's. Nobody ever imagined that there could be any harm in it, but the fact of those two being so glad to get away and be by themselves, was what human nature was not to be expected to endure night after night without jealousy. Mr. Lyndon always fretted till his daughter-in-law came down again, and very often made some excuse for sending for her. She was longer, he thought, than usual this evening, and the entry of two visitors, who, in spite of the severity of the weather, had just dropped in, according to Cannymoor custom, to talk over the events of the day, furnished him with a good reason for despatching Lucy up-stairs with a pungent message. Lucy found her standing, as if there was no such thing as frost, watching the stars from the staircase window.

'Is there anything to be seen, my dear?' she cried, with some curiosity.

'Come and look,' was the answer. Lucy came, but saw nothing particular. 'La, my dear, I only see stars; I thought there was something new.'

'Is there nothing new to you there?' asked Adelaide, mildly.

'Dear me, no—why should there be? The stars are always the same, are they not? Do come down; it looks so odd for you to be standing here staring out of the window at nothing.'

'Do you remember,' said Adelaide, thoughtfully, without seeming to hear the last remark, 'what Walter said when he was a little fellow—"Mamma, I know now what the stars are—they are *angels' eyes*?"'

'To be sure, and very pretty and clever it was of the dear child. My dear, there are Mr. Spindler and his cousin——'

'Ay, Lucy; but supposing now the boy's fancy were true, and each of those bright points were an eye of sublimest intellect, power, and holiness, watching all we did, said, and thought—which of us would dare to let it meet our own?'

'My dear Adelaide!'

'Which of us would be so callous to shame as to be ready to let all those meannesses be noticed, weighed, and registered, that make us day after day despise our fellow-beings, and ourselves still more? Which of us could challenge such a jury to sift our motives, our



wishes, our springs of action ; or feel content that judges who never knew the power of temptation, the force of provocation, or the weakness of man's utmost strength, should calmly criticise our doings, and esteem us as we deserve ?'

'Adelaide, dear, I wish you would not talk in that very unpleasant way.'

'The child's fancy was wrong,' she continued, her dark glance still fixed intently on the heavens ; 'wrong especially in *this*, that it put more on angels than angelic power could bear. Nothing but infinite patience, infinite long-suffering, and infinite love—feeling for human nature, from having shared its weakness, and hoping in it, because itself the root of its strength—could have looked on the paltry littlenesses of a single generation, and not have swept the whole race away !'

Lucy looked at her in fear and perplexity. She had too much awe of her sister-in-law's attainments to attempt to argue, even if she had understood the full meaning of what she said ; but she felt that some sensible remark was due, and was rather put to it to devise one.

'I have always thought the stars a very pretty study,' looking up with some complacency to the sky, 'and I know, when I went to school, the use of the globes was a very particular item in the bills, and very proper that it should be so. If I had a memory like yours—but I really *do* remember something about the Ram, the Bull, the Heavenly Twins—by the way, how a ram and a bull could be twins at all, I don't quite see—but I suppose it is only a poetical way of expressing it. Well, my dear, now we have thoroughly enjoyed this beautiful night, I think perhaps it will look better if we go down to our friends.'

Lucy escaped down stairs : Lady Adelaide, following at her leisure, heard her, as she entered, eagerly declaring, 'The stars are so beautiful, and Adelaide and I do so dote upon the stars !'

The laugh that greeted this remark was of all sounds the one the fair widow detested most : the voice was cracked, and there was an accompanying chuckle of conscious cleverness that she never could encounter without impatience and aversion. It was, in fact, no other than the Mr. Spindler already mentioned, who had called, as he occasionally did in the evening, with his cousin Miss Chatterley, and of whom a few words must be spoken here ; for if once they begin themselves, there will be no further opportunity.

The sketch of Cannymoor politics given by Bob the driver to Mr. Randolph was, as might have been expected from the shrewd class to which the informant belonged, pretty accurate. Mr. Spindler, who had made a great deal of money nobody knew exactly how,

though some Shareham people were impertinent enough to express divers strong opinions thereon, had long cherished a secret ambition to become a landed proprietor, and had only been baffled in his scheme of reuniting all the Lyndon property by the present occupant stepping into the Manorhouse before him. The Lyndons had a happy way of looking upon this old gentleman, by an elegant kind of fiction, as an agent or representative of their house, and patronized and welcomed him outwardly, while they were rather afraid and very jealous of him in their hearts. He, on the other hand, observed great respect towards the family, and always appeared as their zealous, deferential friend; while he took care that very little should go on in their household or affairs of which he was not informed, sometimes before they were themselves. Miss Chatterley, who kept his house, equalled and seconded him in this sociable curiosity; with this difference, that the gentleman sought information chiefly to turn it to account, and the lady to impart it to others.

If to this it be necessary to add any description, we may just mention that Mr. Spindler was a little, ordinary-looking man, in a brown wig, with his hands perpetually diving into his pockets, as if he had mislaid a sixpence, which he was constantly on the point of finding, but had never found yet: and that Miss Chatterley was past the bloom of youth, and therefore very properly made up for the lack of tints in her complexion by boundless variety in her costume.

The moment Lady Adelaide appeared, looking very tall, distant, and polite, she was assailed with affectionate inquiries after 'that angel of a little boy!—so shocked to hear of his being so treated!'

'I assure your ladyship,' cried Miss Chatterley, 'directly we heard of it, cousin Abel and I, which we did just at tea-time, by the merest chance in the world, from our maid Phoebe having met Mrs. Grayling's cook, who had seen Bob Lowe from the George at Shareham, we put down our cups, and couldn't have tasted another drop, not if it was ever so! Such a thing to happen in broad daylight! Pitchforks and bludgeons the ruffians had—I hope no pistols; but really, one never knows. How is the little darling, my lady?'

'Walter is perfectly well, thank you,' said Lady Adelaide; not at all recognizing anybody's right to make a little darling of her son—'he was only teased by a few mischievous boys.'

'No, really! well to be sure! We were so frightened, do you know, my lady—Abel and I—that we put on our things, all I don't know how, and off we went to the rectory to inquire, because we had heard that some strange gentleman had rescued the sweet darling from the ruffians, and had been wounded and carried into Dr.

Home's; so it was only civil just to ask, and when we got there, the maid, Colly, as they call her, didn't like to trouble us to go in—a very considerate person is Colly, always—but we knew the dear old Doctor would be so hurt if we did not step in for a minute; so in we went, just to say "How d'ye do?" and sure enough, there was the strange gentleman, taking tea with the Doctor and Sophy, and going to stop all night.'

'He is an old pupil of Dr. Home's,' put in Miss Penelope; 'Walter told us so when he came in. What sort of person is he?'

'Oh really, I can hardly say, dear Miss Lyndon: you know one does not like to appear impertinent, and pushing, and inquisitive, and I hardly looked at him; we only stayed a few minutes; but I should say he is a good-looking man, between thirty and forty, very brown, tanned with his travels: thick dark eyebrows and mustachios, and such clever eyes; very gentlemanly and civil—particularly so—asked all kinds of questions about the place and the society, and all that; at least, he was most attentive when I was mentioning how lucky he was to come into the neighbourhood while your family were here; and seemed to wish to know so much, that really I felt as if I had all the talk to myself, which is always uncomfortable. "Dear me, Mr. Randolph," said I, at last, "I can stay no longer to talk to you; if I were to sit here all night, praising Mr. Lyndon's family, I should not say half enough. You must just make their acquaintance yourself, and judge for yourself;" and he made the politest bow in the world and said—no, I cannot repeat what he said. Is he not charming, Abel?'

'No doubt, my dear,' said Mr. Spindler, with a knowing smile; 'no doubt. A man of fortune, I understand—and a man of the world, I can see. You must keep him at Cannymoor, Miss Lyndon; you must keep him at Cannymoor. Men like that don't come all this way just to go away again. He has his reasons, depend upon it: what they are, concern none of us; so we need not trouble ourselves about them; but if he wants to be comfortable, he had better stay where he is, and we can find him a snug lodging somewhere among us. You must look him up, Mr. Lyndon.'

'I should have waited on him, of course,' said that gentleman, rather drily; 'or on any friend of the rector's. As to detaining him, or anybody else at Cannymoor, having no interest in the matter, I prefer leaving them to themselves.'

'Ah! you great men are always so indifferent; it is nothing to you whether houses are well let or empty,' chuckled Mr. Spindler, with a sudden dive after the lost sixpence, from which nothing ensued; 'now, poor landlords like me have to reckon every chance, and keep our eye on every safe tenant we run against. I am very angry, my lady, about the treatment of my little favourite, Walter;

if they are tenants of mine, I'll handle them for it, you may depend—pretty roughly, too!

'Pray, Spindler, do not trouble yourself,' interrupted Mr. Lyndon, reddening; 'I shall inquire myself, which will be quite sufficient, I hope.'

'Oh! more than sufficient, Mr. Lyndon; and pray use my name as much as you please; threaten as much as you like; the scoundrels! The first man who is behind with his rent shall smart for it. But what was it put them out, do you know?'

'Why the fact is, Mr. Spindler,' said Penelope, with a significant glance, 'that Walter is made so much of, and taught a smattering of so many things, that he has set up for being cleverer than his neighbours, and must needs go showing off his cleverness to the village boys, and they pelted him for his pains. I hope it will be a lesson to him for life, that is all I can say.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Spindler, shaking his head, 'it is a great mistake letting young folks learn so much as they do now; it only makes them idle. Give me a good sharp lad with an eye to the main chance, who, if he gets a halfpenny, finds a way to make a penny of it; and I wouldn't give you sixpence for all the books and experiments and apparatus that ever were invented. Those are *my* principles, my lady,' rubbing his hands; 'and I fancy they've answered pretty well—eh?'

Lady Adelaide lifted her eyes from her work with a look of haughty surprise that would have repelled a less daring assailant; but it was not so easy to repel Mr. Spindler. That she disliked him cordially, he was perfectly aware, and it seemed only to add to the keen interest he took in her every word, look, and action. The more she fenced herself in her proud reserve, the more resolutely he came to the attack.

'The people hereabouts take such notions into their heads, my lady'—moving across the room to sit near her. 'Do you know, I have actually heard some of them remark on your visits to that sulky-looking fellow, Sergeant Wade, as if they were quite jealous of your condescension being so thrown away; while I dare say, if all was known, he is a good civil sort of old chap at heart—eh? Does not your ladyship find him so?'

'Sometimes.'

'Just so—not always civil even to you. But talks now and then, and lets you into his past life, I dare say. Very interesting, no doubt—and very good in your ladyship to listen.'

'There is not much goodness in listening to what is interesting,' said Lady Adelaide.

'Then it is interesting—hem!—your ladyship admits it. What a singular character he is!—seen plenty of service?—served under

some of your ladyship's family, I think—no? I beg pardon; it was my mistake. At any rate, Cannymoor ought to be very grateful to any lady who deigns to civilize so rough a subject as Sergeant Wade. Well, Susan, now we are assured that all is well here, I think, as it is getting late, we must be going.'

But they did not go the sooner for saying this; Miss Susan was not so easily stopped in her flow of discourse, and they stayed, and gossiped, and drank hot elder wine, and discussed the whole neighbourhood, and kept up a stream of conjectures, disputes, and petty scandal, such as only could be attained by hearty and constant practice; and which, jarring as it did on Adelaide's taste and feelings, she had no choice but to sit and endure politely, till she was almost desperate.

And this was a specimen of her every-day life, which she was to lead, as far as she could see, for years yet to come!

On her way to her own room, when release came at last, she looked in again at her boy. He was in the sound, deep sleep of health; his brown hair rumpled, his cheeks glowing, and far beyond the power of her kiss to waken. And yet there was a passion in that kiss that thrilled through every fibre of her frame. For he was her all on earth—all she had now to show in return for her once bright heritage—youth, hope, love, and home! And as she bent over his pillow, and lightly parted the hair from his flushed temples, it seemed to dawn upon her, as if for the first time, how fearfully precious he was.

Words had been spoken that day that had stirred up the depths of memory, where its waters were of Marah; and now the waves began to flow over her soul. That irrevocable past, with its opening holiday scene of indulgence and mirth, and intellectual enjoyment, and the homage of friends and attendants, before she had ever seen a face that did not smile on her, or heard a voice that uttered reproof, contention, or ill-will—that spring-time of joyous existence, when existence itself was happiness—succeeded by that stern and wintry battle-field into which, untrained and unarmed, she had dared to enter, and on the outskirts whereof she was now fighting her daily inglorious fight, without banner, clarion, or shield!

And with these shifting scenes came a form, belonging alike to both periods; in the one, so full of tenderness that its memory brought a yearning with it almost too much to bear—in the other, so terrible in its unforgiving severity, that its aspect chilled unto death. Others came and went, faded and returned—but this was fixed in its twofold identity; and pointing to the gladness gone—to the struggles endured—to two graves on the far Eastern shore, seemed to repeat that fearful assertion of Scripture, that has rung

the knell of so many generations : 'For all this his anger is *not* turned away, but his hand is stretched out still !'

So vivid grew the impression, that she with difficulty arrested the impulse to throw her arms in defence around her unconscious boy.

'Oh, not on him—not on *him* !' was her unspoken prayer. 'I have borne much—I have much still to bear—and I will bear it till I die ; it cannot be for long ; but not this, not *this*, or my heart would break before its time !'

She kissed the boy again, and was moving away, when he half-opened the sleepiest eyes in the world, and muttered, in that peculiarly inharmonious cadence belonging to somnolency, 'Hold fast, mamma ! all right—I knew I could pull you up.'

'You, my darling ?' she repeated, with a sad smile ; but with a most unsentimental grunt, he rolled over, and disappeared beneath the bed-clothes, to emerge no more that night.

### CHAPTER III.

*Béralde*.—Voilà un medecin, vraiment, que paraît fort habile.

*Argan*.—Oui ; mais il va un peu vite.

*Béralde*.—Tous les grands médecins sont comme cela.—*Molière*.

DR. HOME and his guest sat over the fire ; a little pipkin of mulled port dexterously balancing itself on a pile of red coals, and a tumbler at each gentleman's elbow, that had already been filled once. After they were released from the attention of Mr. Spindler and Miss Chatterley, Randolph had gradually grown more communicative, and Sophy had been kept up long past her usual hour, listening to his wonderful experiences all over the world ; and had gone to bed at last, with her head so full of Arabs and camels, and Nile boatmen, and prairie-fires, and bison-hunting, that it was a question whether she would ever go to sleep. There was a witchery about it all, that neither the old man nor the child could resist ; and Colly, who came in and out when she pleased, found many more excuses than usual for hanging about the room, to catch a few of the anecdotes. The rector failed not to draw his friend's attention to this last circumstance. Maurice could have no idea what a sensible woman that was ; he might tell his stories to a dozen fine ladies, and not one would enter into the spirit of them better than she did, or repeat them again half as well. She might jumble the geography a little, perhaps—candour obliged him to admit that—but after all, there were greater qualities even than geography. 'You couldn't puzzle her in the Land of Canaan, clever as you think yourself ; for such a Bible scholar as Colly is not to be had, sir—no, not in all your fine new schools, that are to make us so much wiser than our grandfathers.'

In point of fact, the old gentleman, while laughing at the admiration of the others, was to the full as much charmed as they were, if not more. It was like a romance to these quiet people, with their unvarying routine of homely duties and simple pleasures, 'never heard of half a mile from home;' and they looked at the man who had seen and heard and done so much, as if they could hardly believe he could be of the same order of beings as themselves.

'Well, well,' said Dr. Home, when he was once more alone with his guest, 'it does one good to be reminded God's horizon reaches a little farther than ours. One is apt to forget that one's own little world is not the only one the sun shines upon; and the longer one forgets, the smaller that same little world seems to grow. And now, Maurice, my lad, you have had enough, in all conscience, of foreign lands—what is your purpose in your own? Duty begins there, my good friend; did come all this way to see your old tutor, and get him to help you find it out?'

'My future plans are quite undecided, Doctor. I shall be glad to listen to any advice you are good enough to give me. It was always worth hearing.'

'Ay, but is it worth following, if it clashes with your own notions? How can I advise a man whose wishes I know nothing about? Hast any wishes, lad?'

'One, Doctor, and a hopeless one.'

'Hopeless? I know no such word; it is not to be found in the Christian's vocabulary: hope *abideth*, Maurice, mind you. What is your wish, my boy?'

'To forget.'

'Ay, ay; is it so? And in your experience as a traveller, have you found that distance and change weaken memory, or strengthen it?'

'That is a question I have tried in vain to answer as I wished, or I should not be here.'

'Maurice, why try to forget a lost blessing? Why not look on it as only gone before?'

Randolph smiled bitterly, and shook his head. His old friend watched his dark features with anxiety and interest, and his voice became womanly in its gentle compassion.

'And it was this, then, that made you a wanderer, Maurice; and its memory in all your wanderings has haunted you still?'

Randolph bowed silently, with his eyes fixed on the fire.

'Is it past remedy, Maurice?'

'Not quite.' His eye gleamed sternly as he spoke.

'Is it in the power of man to relieve you of the burden?'

The dark face grew darker; the athletic frame seemed to vibrate with the consciousness of strength and determination, as he answered, in a low tone, 'It *shall* be.'

The old man looked at him with increasing concern and gravity.

‘And the remembrance itself, Maurice, that has caused you so much trouble—what is it?’

Randolph paused before he replied in the same quiet deep voice as before, ‘The remembrance of a heartless wrong.’

Dr. Home’s ruddy, hale countenance lost every trace of colour for a moment. ‘A *wrong*, Maurice!—and it is this you have tried to forget, and not a sorrow—and gone so far to accomplish it, and failed? Lad, lad! I could have showed thee a much quicker way, and a surer way; I could show it thee now.’

‘And that is—’

‘To *forgive* it.’

‘Never, sir, until the wrong be avenged. I should despise myself if I thought I could be so weak.’

‘Then your purpose in England, after all these years, Maurice, is to be revenged on an enemy?’

‘Something very like it, sir.’

‘You dare not sit there, and insult my profession and grey hairs, lad, by telling me you are coolly planning to break the laws of God and man for some senseless punctilio of honour?’

‘No, my dear, excellent friend; rest easy on that score. I am not quite so bad as you think. Some day I may find courage to tell you all—but now—not yet.’

‘I will not press your confidence, boy; when you have a mind to give it, it will not be thrown away. But one request I am going to make, and you will not say me nay. Spend some time with us, now you *are* come. Your revenge, whatever it may be, since it has kept so long, will keep a little longer; try what a little plain country life will do for it. You are used to rough it, and there is your room for you, as long as you can stay, and a hearty welcome. Sôphy will be delighted; ay, and Colly too, that she will! There is the spirit of a prince in Colly, if she only had opportunities for showing it. Come now, Maurice, promise me.’

And in the warmth of his eagerness, his hospitable nature doubly stimulated by a vague alarm lest his friend should commit some deadly sin as soon as he was out of his parish, he rose from his seat, and caught his guest by both hands.

‘Stay with me, Maurice! You have no home of your own, you say, no family claims; you have the means of doing what you please, give me the comfort of your society; it does me so much good! Let the injuries alone; at any rate until you come across the enemy. Who knows how your mind may change by then? Who knows but you may live to entreat me to forget all you have just said, and to wonder you ever said it? I have seen stranger things in my time.’



'I tell you, Doctor,' interrupted the traveller, hastily, 'I could never live to be a thing so mean.'

'What? never live to know the blessedness of pardon? Yet I have seen thy cheeks glow with the old beautiful stories we read in days gone by; of the coals heaped on the head of the wrong-doer; of the divine nature breaking out of the veil of humanity, when man emulated God's loftiest attributes; time was you felt all this, Maurice—eh! but it has been a sore wrong that has changed thee, lad!'

'It was,' said Randolph, mournfully; 'for it weakened my trust in all that is good, and in myself most of all. But to believe I could ever feel again—no! you do not know what you ask, Doctor, when you tell me to stay here. Let me go; I am a restless, evil, unthankful spirit, who can only hinder your good, peace-loving life. You had better let me go; I had almost resolved to start again to-morrow. Sooner or later we shall wish I had.'

'You came of your own free-will, Maurice, but you shall not go away without mine. It is my duty to lay hands on thee, and forbid thy going one step further in thine evil purpose. Here is thy tent pitched for the present, uneasy Ishmaelite that thou art; and it will be very hard to find any one to quarrel with here, except it be from their excess of zeal and friendliness, like those good folks we had just now, and whom I thought we should never get rid of. I'll find you work to do, never fear! We will have a school lecture or two, and you shall tell them all about your travels, and give us a few hints for our next missionary meeting; a capital idea, that! Ay, ay, and perhaps you might give 'em a touch of natural philosophy, and with the help of a few experiments convince them my little friend Walter is no conjuror, eh? Plenty to do; much wholesomer and happier work than raking up old grievances; so give me your hand, my boy, and promise.'

'Please, sir, you're wanted,' said Colly, putting in her head.

'Promise!' repeated the old rector, impatiently.

Randolph gave a heavy sigh, and promised, and his host left the room.

The traveller was scarcely left alone, before he became powerfully agitated. The emotions he had kept down before his old friend, swelled the veins of his forehead, and brought out the big drops like beads. He walked up and down the room with passionate strides, tried to open the window in vain; flung himself again into his seat, and buried his face in his hands, while broken murmurs fell unconsciously from his lips. 'So near, and yet so far; further divided at this moment than when thousands of miles lay between! Why did I come here at all? what did I mean by it? Am I a child, to be swayed from my purposes by a word—or am I a fool,

an empty, prating, impulse-driven fool? Something of both, it seems to me. What good could I expect would come of my being here? I know it would be better for me to start off at once, and try once more whether change and travel will do for me what they have not done for me yet: anything would be better than to be haunted by that one remembrance, now melting me into childishness, and now stinging me into a mad desire for revenge. So many years, and that scornful look, those disdainful words, unobliterated, unforgotten still! How little knows my good, kind old friend, what he is so earnestly bent on doing. But it is done, and now things may take their course for me; I care not. How close this little room is! I must have air, or I shall go mad.'

He had just started up, when his host re-entered in his great-coat. 'Sorry to leave you, Maurice, my boy. You will find a good fire in your room; trust Colly for that! but I must be off. Just like women. Here have I been week after week bullying her to bring her baby to church for baptism, and she put it off; sponsors couldn't come, or no shoes, or no bonnet, or some silly excuse or other, and now she fancies she is ill, and the child is ill, and there they all are at their wits' end, and sending for me in the middle of this sharp night without the slightest compunction. Have you had enough wine?—sure?—then I'll just turn this hot stuff into this bottle, and take it with me. It will warm their hearts at any rate. Take care of yourself, Maurice.'

'Must you go? have you no curate?'

'Curate! no, indeed, nor any such luxury; nor doctor either, within five miles. They expect me to prescribe for body and soul at once. I say, where are you going?'

'Only to find my cloak and hat, sir.'

'You are not coming too; stuff—nonsense—after your cold journey. Go up to bed, sir, this minute, or I shall be setting you five hundred lines of Virgil. I know I shall.'

Randolph's reply to this threat was by bringing his cigar to Colly's kitchen-candle, nodding in her face in return for the light, and drawing his hat over his brows.

'Well, well,' said the old gentleman, after a little consideration, 'have your own way, and you'll live the longer. It never hurts a man to be reminded of his baptism, and in your case, perhaps, the oftener the better.'

The cottage to which the rector was summoned was on the moor; and starry and glorious as was the night, as soon as they had left the shelter of the village, the wind came down upon them keen enough to try the hardihood of any pedestrian, to say nothing of the snow that lay there, often ankle deep. Randolph at first did not recognize the lad who brought the summons, till Dr. Home stopped

to recover his breath for a minute, and relieve his feelings at the expense of the messenger.

‘I wonder when people will learn common sense, and to do the right thing at the right time! Why could not that poor babe have been brought to the church properly, instead of my being sent for in the middle of the night, when I can hardly get along? Stephen, you young villain, I am surprised you had the face to come near me after your behaviour this afternoon!’

Stephen grumbled something about ‘wouldn’t for a long time, but mother would have it.’

‘If your mother desired you to come, you ought not to have “wouldn’t” at all. Come, let us walk on, or she will be anxious. What is the matter with them, all in this hurry?’

‘I doan’t like to say.’

‘Never mind whether you like it or not, that is not of the slightest consequence; only tell me directly.’

‘You’ll be angry with me.’

‘Then it is some prank of yours, as I suspected. Angry with you? I should rather think so, indeed!’

‘Nay, sir, it warn’t my doing exactly, but the young ’uns this morning got to play, and Sergeant Wade’s garden is nigh *ourn*, you know, and they throwed snowballs right agin his winder; and he come out and swore at ’em, and mother, she run, hearing the noise, and she did call him pretty strong names, sure——’

‘No doubt. Well!’

‘Well, sir, he said nought to her, only looked wicked like, as he do when he is put up; and mother, she got more mad than ever, and she scoffed at him, and snapped her fingers at him, and at all the powers of darkness, she said, and he looked very bitter, and banged his door in her face.’

‘Civil, certainly; but rather what might have been expected. But how has this——’

‘Well, sir, this evening, what does he do, but come and stand right in our door, as we was all at supper, looking as savage as a bear, and says he, “Is it true what I hear, mistress, that your lads and such like, have been ill-treating my lady’s boy?” says he, and he shook his fist when he said it; and mother, she up quite bold, and says she, “Suppose they did, Sergeant Wade, what have you to say to that, I should like to know?” for you see, it put her out that he should come interfering, else she’d blowed me up about it just before he come. “What have I to say?” says he, holding up his great bony finger. “Why just this—if a hair of that child’s head is hurt, it will be the bitterest day *you* ever saw, any of you. Have some thought of your *own*, woman!” says he, and points right at the babby. “I know it’s not yet even as much of a Christian as

*you can make it;*' and he walked off with a horrid laugh, and mother screeched and caught up the little 'un, and set her off yowling, and they've been bad ever since.'

'And it was the pointing of the old man's finger that disagreed with them, eh?'

'I don't know what it was, sir, but mother was in a peck of troubles about it, along of the babby not being christened, you know, sir.'

'Ay, ay; you think that is a magic charm, to keep bad luck out of your house; you will not come and receive the blessing at the proper times, but when you have called the devil up by envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, you expect me to come and lay him for you. Suppose you run on before, and say I'm coming. There, Maurice, there is a specimen of the understandings you are to help to enlighten. I shall have all the difficulty in the world to drive this out of their foolish heads. A woman storms at her neighbour, and screeches over her baby, and then, when she and the baby feel the worse, the neighbour has bewitched her. I only wish he had given her something harder than words, silly creature; and so I shall tell her.'

Randolph touched his arm. 'Tell me, first, who is that standing there?'

'Where? I see nought. Yes, now I do, and no wonder you ask, and no wonder our scapegrace scudded past him so uncommonly fast. The old fellow guesses I have been sent for, and is hanging about to enjoy the fright he has given them, and jeer at me. Hulloo, sergeant! a sharp night, eh? You have seen sharper ones though, I dare say, in your time.'

The person so addressed, a tall, weatherbeaten figure, turned his face towards the speaker, showing in the pale starlight the dim outline of stern, haggard features, long shaggy hair and beard, and grey eyes, full of wild fierce light, that at times almost resembled that of insanity. He put his forefinger slowly to his cap, but made no answer.

'Hard weather for old fellows like you and me,' continued the cheery old rector; 'but we are both old soldiers, and must stick to our colours, come what may, eh?'

Something approaching a grim smile wrinkled the hard face for a moment, and a deep voice came out through the tangled mass of hair. 'Ay, people think to come round one that way always; I've heard it twenty times, at least. I know all the texts, sir—the whole armour, and the captain of salvation, and the fight of faith, and all about it. Don't waste your words on me—they'll do more good a little further on.'

'No offence, friend, I hope?' said the old clergyman, with invincible good-humour, while his kind heart ached with pity.

'No, sir, none. If you can tell me whether my lady's boy is hurt, I shall be obliged to you, on the contrary.'

'My lady's boy is as well and as saucy as possible, as this gentleman can tell you, who rescued him from snowballing.'

The old soldier touched his cap to Randolph, who returned the salute punctiliously.

'Thank you, sir, I am glad to hear it; and you may tell your people, if you please, that if he is ever touched by one of them again, I'll know the reason why, that's all.'

And with that, he turned on his heel, and moved away to his cottage.

'There,' said Dr. Home, 'now you have seen our village bugbear. Rather a singular friend for an exclusive lady to select, eh? And yet I am very grateful to her, for it is the only hold we have on him. Her beauty has a magic effect in melting his surliness, and I question if any belle, in her gayest London season, ever had a higher compliment.'

'What can have made him so surly, do you suppose?'

'Ah! I am afraid it has been some dreadful grief, or disappointment; those visitations must either draw us closer to heaven, or thrust us further from it. We must wait patiently; the good words he knows and scoffs at may yet come to cheer him before he dies. He gives me the idea of a man who has been religious once, and is continually tormented with the memory of what it was with him in days past, when the secret of God was in his tabernacle. I meet such occasionally, and their cure is always the hardest of all. It is the old story, hackneyed by frequent quotation—

Nessun maggior dolore,  
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice  
Nella miseria—

Poor old fellow! Here comes Jem Ball himself, the only one of his family that has a grain of sense. Well, Jem! here's a pretty state of things among you—how is your wife?'

'Why, sir, she's but badly, and that's the truth; she has been going on as if she was crazy like; such scolding and crying, and throwing of herself about, and cuffing the youngsters, and rating at me as if I'd done it all; she says she's bewitched, but I don't know what to say to that, so I says nought.'

'And very wisely, Jem; I wish all the world had your sense—eh, Maurice? Why, where is that fellow? Oh, there you are! what were you lagging behind about?'

'Only making friends with the sergeant.'

'Nonsense!'

'True, I assure you; I learned the secret from George Borrow. I lifted my hat politely with one hand, and offered him a cigar with

the other. The old fellow was won in a minute ; I'll be bound he is a judge of such matters, and knows that sort are not to be had every day. At any rate he accepted it with a salute—we did not exchange a syllable, but we shall not be the less friends for that.'

'What do you think of that, Jem?' said Dr. Home, not a little amused.

Jem scratched his head, and looked rather puzzled. 'Well, sir, mappen if folks tried him with civil ways instead of rough, he'd be more Christianlike himself, in time.'

'Go thy ways, Jem ; thou hast spoken a wise and a true word, and please God, we'll try and act upon it, some of us. May I bring this gentleman in with me? He has done one wonder already—maybe he will be able to work a second.'

'Come in, gentlemen, and welcome,' said honest Jem ; 'but if you can manage to bring my good woman to reason, it will be doing a wonder indeed !'

Randolph was somewhat of the same opinion when he entered the stiflingly close room, where, above the din of half-a-dozen voices in eager dispute, that of the patient made itself shrilly audible, overpowering all the rest. Two or three children were huddled together in a corner, with half-dismayed, half-rebellious looks, as if recently driven there by coercive measures ; one or two more, already put to bed, but far from having attained the end for which bed was invented, occasionally added their voices from their invisible dormitory ; the baby lay lamenting across the knees of an old neighbour, who was urging the necessity of repeating the drop of comfort she had already administered without success ; and of course everybody was suggesting something else—Mrs. Ball herself sobbing and crying, arguing with each in turn, with bitter denunciations of vengeance against the author or authors of her wrongs. The entrance of the gentlemen caused a momentary hush, but directly Dr. Home asked a question, the torrent broke out anew. With some difficulty he obtained a hearing, and the first use he made of it was to declare, with marked emphasis, that unless they were quiet, he should just walk home again ; which, heartily seconded by Jem, had the desired effect. Order was established, and the arrangements for the service made with proper reverence, when an unexpected difficulty arose. Two of the intended sponsors were there already, having come in to help—one a good-natured, motherly neighbour, and the other a demure, rosy-cheeked lass, formerly one of the rector's best Sunday scholars ; but the godfather, the baby's uncle, was away at the mill at Farnley, and all the rector's assurances that he was not wanted—that the sponsors would be required when the child was received in church, but not before, would not satisfy Mrs. Ball. A christen-

ing without the godfather was no christening at all, she said, and she was nearly off again into one of her fits of hysterics, when, to the intense excitement of the other sponsors, Mr. Randolph requested leave to fill the vacant office. The parents grew red with pride and satisfaction. Dr. Home, taken quite by surprise, looked earnestly and gravely at his friend, as if to ask whether he had weighed the importance of the charge, but meeting a firm, serious glance in return, made no objection. As soon as all had taken their places, 'I have a word or two, first, to say to the sponsors,' said he. Attention was instantly excited, and not a little curiosity.

'Mary Steadiman,' turning to the younger godmother, 'I know you are well acquainted with the catechism; would you object to telling us what you mean to promise in the church for this infant?'

Mary Steadiman, blushing violently at the sound of her own voice before the strange gentleman, did as she was requested.

'Thank you, Mary. Now, as you say the child is to keep God's commandments, will you tell me which are the two greatest?'

Mary thought a moment, and replied as she would have done in the Sunday school; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart . . . and thy neighbour as thyself.'

'Very good, Mary; then you and the other sponsors are going to promise that this child will love God and her neighbour?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Very well. Now, my dear friends, I wonder if it ever occurred to any of us in *what way* we love ourselves? I very much doubt if we find it necessary that some kind and charitable person should come and say to us, "There, don't be so hard upon yourself, you did not mean to be so foolish, you meant no harm by that silly word—or you were hasty, and are sorry for it now, and would be glad to mend it if you could; there is no need to tell that unpleasant story against yourself, or repeat that ill-natured remark about yourself, or to tell that circumstance about yourself in that peculiar way that makes you appear so ridiculous, or so unkind, or so unfair; give yourself fair play, and be more chary and tender of your good name." I don't think we require this, do we?'

'No, sir.'

'Still less do we require that it should be said, "Do not bear such ill-will towards yourself; do not keep an old grudge rankling in your heart to make your life bitter; believe in your own better nature; make allowances for temptation, for provocation, for circumstances; throw a veil over that fault; put a charitable construction on that word; bear with that wrong; overlook that neglect; love yourself too well to be your own enemy." I think we are all quick enough to do that when it comes to the point. People talk

of not forgiving themselves, sometimes, but it is wonderful how soon they manage it. Oh, my dear friends, but our neighbour—the neighbour we are to love as we do ourselves—to pardon as we do ourselves—to feel for as we do for ourselves—how is it with him? What will become of us if God's law be indeed carried strictly out, and He deal with us hereafter as here we have dealt with *them*?

Nobody answered; all eyes were bent on the ground. The rector opened his prayer-book, and the service began; but very little of it fell on Randolph's ear. He stood and knelt with the rest mechanically, his thoughts meanwhile wandering on widely different scenes, till he was startled by finding Dr. Home looking him full in the face, with the peremptory command—'Name this child.'

'*Adelaide*.'

My lady's own name! Whatever would she say? All the assistants, who had left the choice, as a compliment, to the strange godfather, looked at each other in dismay and astonishment. Maurice's sunburnt face glowed with a sudden rush of blood, and he seemed about to recall the word that had so unwittingly escaped; but Dr. Home allowed him no time, and the noble name was given.

'And now,' said the old rector, when the service was over, 'now for our bodily ills.'

It was wonderful how much good the quiet interval had done already; and Mrs. Ball felt almost at a loss how to describe her symptoms, when Mr. Randolph, gravely announcing himself as possessing a certain amount of medical knowledge, began making professional inquiries. It came out, however, by degrees, that whenever that old man looked at her, or spoke to her, she felt 'all of a crawl, and all of a creep,' and her head seemed on fire like, and she shook so that you might knock her down with a feather; and wouldn't my lady be mortally affronted at their having made free with her name? This fear seemed so much to aggravate the other symptoms, that Randolph was forced to take the whole responsibility upon himself, and leave them to suppose it had been done as intentionally as it certainly was the reverse.

'As to your neighbour's looks, my good woman, I know what you are afraid of, and I have dealt with these cases before; and for one spell or charm that can be spoken against you or my godchild that is to be, I know half a dozen stronger in your favour. Yes, Dr. Home may shake his head and look amazed at my audacity; I am nearly as much a stranger to him as to you, and as I have been nearly all over the world I have seen many strange things, and learnt many stranger still. But I must request the most implicit trust and obedience. Give me two tumblers of water.'



He was obeyed in wondering haste, but their wonder was greater still when he took a case from his pocket, full of tiny bottles, containing fluids of different colours, and dropped a drop or two into one tumbler, and another drop or two in the other, and then mixed, and measured, and went through divers mysterious performances, to the breathless admiration of the bystanders; ending in administering a teaspoonful to the patient with great solemnity.

'Now, my good woman, as this is to counteract the evil influence, I desire you keep yourself as quiet as you can, while you are taking it three times a day. Avoid speaking to Sergeant Wade; if ever you are going to speak to him, or of him, take a teaspoonful of this mixture first, and wait five minutes afterwards. Don't drink any spirits, and keep yourself cheerful; a great deal depends on that. And for Miss Adelaide, I see what she wants; get some warm water ready, in a clean tub.'

This not being a favourite remedy, was easier ordered than done; however, a deeply-interested neighbour, volunteering to fetch hers, the bath presently appeared, and Mr. Randolph gravely dropped a drop of something in it, and desired the baby should be bathed very carefully, and take a spoonful of the mixture in the tumblers, and be kept strictly from all 'comforts,' as they destroyed the effect of the mysterious medicine. It was to be kept warm and cheerful, and never be allowed to hear an angry word. Whenever it did, some of the good spell was lost. All this was received with the deepest submission, and profound obedience promised.

Randolph then kissed his god-daughter, shook hands with his fellow sponsors, left on the hard palm of the father a substantial proof of his good will, and quitted the cottage, followed by their thanks and praises.

'Well, Doctor,' said he, when they were outside, 'what do you think of me?'

'Lad,' replied the old gentleman, 'I am old-fashioned, perhaps obsolete in my notions; I am not used to these new ways of dealing, and I can tell you, it will not be in a hurry that I shall take you to a christening again. Didst consider a minute what it was thou wast taking on thyself—eh? And then, when it was done, whether it was right and reverent to follow such an act with all that tomfoolery and hoaxing? Making me, too, look like an oaf, staring at your antics!'

'Doctor, you quoted one Italian poet a little while ago; I will remind you of another, who applauds such a proceeding:—

Succchi amari ingannato intanto ei beve  
E dall' inganno suo vita riceve.

Wait awhile and see whether it proves so with my patient. I am

not going to enter into philosophical and medical explanations in the cold and the dark.'

'But, Maurice, my good fellow——'

'But, my dear Doctor, I have only one thing to say to decide the matter. I told you it would be better to send me away at once, and I say so still; but if you keep me here, I must follow my own whims and quirks, whatever they may be. The choice is in your hands; I advise you to let me start to-morrow, as I proposed; but if I stay, I have sworn to myself to have my own way in Cannymoor, and be the most popular person in it; and what I have sworn, I will accomplish, or, as Sergeant Wade says, I'll know the reason why.'

'Well, well, only stay with me, Maurice, and you shall please yourself; how you are to contrive to get your own way here, I do not exactly see; but that is not my affair, and the folks are kind and civil enough, if you humour them a bit. What is it you are looking at so hard?'

'What light is that?'

'That? It comes from the Manorhouse, I believe; does it not, Stephen?' for Stephen had followed them, unbidden.

'Ay, that be my lady's room,' said Stephen; 'Betty says she is up half the night a'most.'

'Well, and if she is, does it hinder other folks going to bed?'

'Well, I don't know, sir; but Master Walter told Betty, he and his mamma could blow the whole house up any minute, if they chose, and that warn't downright comfortable, you see, sir; and Betty herself seed some awful things in my lady's room, for she told me so.'

'Betty and you are well matched. What might the awful things be?'

'*Skeletons*, sir,' said Stephen, solemnly.

'*Skeletons!* nonsense!—Did Betty say she *saw* them?'

'Not quite *saw* them, sir, but there was a bottle of dreadful stuff on the table, that burnt a hole in her gown directly she took the cork out, and Master Walter had got a lot of leaves and flowers out of the churchyard, and he told her hisself his mamma was going to make him some skeletons.'

'Oh!' said Dr. Home, now almost out of patience; 'well, we shall be wiser in time; go to bed, Stephen, and some day we will see if we can explain matters, and disentangle Betty's intellects and your own, which seem in a most deplorable state at present. Good-night. Why, Maurice, you look as lost as if you were watching some new planet, that was to light you to fortune and fame, as it did Herschel.'

Randolph started as if the words had stung him, as perhaps they did. He drew his old friend's arm in his own, and they walked on without further remark; the traveller's eye ever and anon turning to steal one more glance at that steady, solitary light.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

One little word, all light and vain,  
May break that heart's repose.—*Ballad.*

MR. RANDOLPH was not mistaken in thinking he should make a sensation in Cannymoor. For the next few days there was little else talked about than the interesting stranger. Those who could find an excuse for calling at the rectory, called; and those who could not, met the rector accidentally, when he happened to be walking with his friend: and everybody who had been introduced, went to see everybody else who hadn't, to ask if they *had*; and to tell all they had heard, seen, or thought anent his past history and future designs. Everything was in his favour. He was ascertained to be rich; the driver who brought him from Shareham said he had no end of trunks left at the George, and threw his money about like a lord: besides, he *had* talked of looking out for a snug little property, on which to settle after his years of vagrancy, and the rector let out his friend had more money than he knew what to do with—more was the pity; and he seemed to have no relations, no claims on his fortune; to have dropped from the clouds, as it were, where nobody but the old Doctor had ever heard of him before; rushing, like a true hero of melodrama, just in time to rescue somebody from what *might* have been imminent peril, you know, if it was not so exactly; nothing could be more interesting.

'And so civil,' said old Mrs. Grayling to her friends. 'As soon as he knew I was treasurer to the Reading Club, he begged to subscribe his two guineas, as if he was a resident, and to be admitted to the privileges at once; there was nothing he liked better than to have his lighter studies selected by ladies. Those were his identical words; much politer than the rector, who does nothing but find fault and grumble, when one tries and tries one's best to get pretty, entertaining books. I sent him, only the other day, three of the sweetest volumes you ever saw. I don't remember what they were about, exactly; only the heroine marries a charming lord, or goes into a nunnery, or something: Miss Lucy Lyndon ordered it, and she has the sweetest taste.'

'So different from Lady Adelaide!' returned Miss Chatterley, 'who never condescends to like what anybody else does, and who pretends to care for nothing but dry difficult books, that I don't believe she ever gets through, or if she does, she can't understand

a quarter of. So mighty grand as she was, pretending to think nothing of her little boy being attacked by the mob—declaring it was only the mischief of a few boys—so unfeeling! I declare, if I were the mother of fifty children, I should be more anxious about them than she is about her one. But as to Mr. Randolph, oh, he is a charming man! Did you hear of his wonderful cures? It is so extraordinary! There were Mrs. Ball and her baby at the point of death, I believe,—one in a raging fever, the other in dreadful fits, owing to some terrible fright they had had from old Wade in one of his paroxysms; and they sent in an agony to Dr. Home in the middle of the night, and he jumped out of bed in a minute, and Mr. Randolph, he was sitting up in his own room, writing (he writes immensely, I understand, and I am sure he means to put us all in a book), and he heard the noise; for poor Stephen was crying ready to break his heart, and nothing would please him but he must go too. And he went, and promised to stand godfather to the baby, with Rachel Ford and Mary Steadiman—only conceive how droll! and gave the father I don't know how much money as a christening present, and then he put a drop of something in the mother's mouth, and a drop in the child's, and in five minutes they were both sleeping as sweetly as cherubs, and have been perfectly well ever since. The people are all wild about it, and Mr. Randolph has patients coming to him at all hours of the day, and they all say he does them more good than anybody ever did. I declare, the first time I am at all ill—don't stare; I am often very ill indeed, but nobody finds it out—I shall send for him to prescribe for me.'

Mr. Spindler rubbed his hands with that peculiar chuckle that always made Lady Adelaide shrink instinctively. 'I say, Susan, when you *are* ill, it will be of a galloping consumption, I take it: you would never stand anything slower. But don't you think to take in our new neighbour; he is a sharp one, that I can see; he let out a thing or two yesterday about the monied interest of the country that showed me he was none of your old-world sort, but knows the value of having your own purse in your own *pocket*.' He always pronounced this word with exulting emphasis; and as he did so, the hand rushed at the sixpence, and remained vigorously chasing it for some time.

'Quite a gentleman, my dears,' was Mr. Lyndon's verdict, after his first call, made in due form, and with proper aristocratic dignity—'quite a gentleman, and a man of sense, who has seen the world; knows the difference between the position of the landed gentry, and that of a mere buyer and seller of acres and tenements; a shrewd observer, too—evidently amused with the good people about here—understood old Spindler in a moment. I think we

may safely encourage his visits here, Penny; we owe it to our friend Home to show due courtesy to his visitor: he loves a rubber dearly, he says, and is keen upon sport; does not pretend to sneer at a day on the moors, though he has bagged strange vermin enough to satisfy Gordon Cumming. He talks of sending for servants and buying horses, if he remains here long. He must drink tea with us, Penny, and the sooner the better. He shall see there is some good society in Cannymoor, besides old Spindler and Susan Chatterley, who follow him about like a couple of beagles.'

Miss Lyndon had no objection; quite the reverse. When Mr. Randolph returned the Squire's call, which happened when she alone was at home, she received him with marked civility, and was as much impressed in his favour as everybody else. His manner had a grace in it rarely seen in Cannymore, and his expressions of gratitude for the hospitable and friendly way in which the gentry of the place had admitted him to their society—grateful to all, but with an additional emphasis of respect towards the Manorhouse—were exactly what she best loved to hear. Travelling as much as he had done, he had, of course, seen great variety, but if you asked him what was the happiest style of life, there was nothing, in his opinion, equal to that of the English country gentleman, on his own estate, with his own fair relatives gracing his halls, and enjoying all the dignity of influence with all the freedom of social intercourse. And then he talked of music and gardening, and the last fashions, as he saw them on his way through Paris; admired some quaint old china that was the pride of Miss Lyndon's heart; and departed, leaving her more pleased than she cared in general to express.

Lady Adelaide received the report of the stranger's fascinating manners with much composure. She should be glad to thank him for his good-nature to Walter, but otherwise, this new acquisition was of no more interest to her than the usual run of exciting events in Cannymoor. When, too, she was warned that it was solemnly decreed a high festival to the neighbourhood, of tea, music, cards, and supper, should be given in honour of the stranger—an announcement that put the whole parish into a fever of excitement and preparation—her only remark, provoking woman! was, that she should be glad when it was over; and not a single additional stitch, as Miss Chatterley told the public generally, on the best authority, did she condescend to have put into her wardrobe; though everybody had seen her in that old *moiré antique*, till they could tell every crease in it blindfold.

'It is so odd of her, Mr. Randolph!' for nothing of all this was allowed to escape his ears; 'we used to hear so much about Walter

Lyndon and his lady in India, living in the first style, and being looked up to everywhere, his advice taken by the generals, and himself being quite a rajah, his father used to say, among the natives, we fully expected when his widow came here, she would have shawls upon shawls, and di'monds, and gold chains, and all that, like an Indian princess. It would only have been right and proper, wouldn't it? Well, would you believe it? I don't think she had more than two trunks for herself and the boy, and not a di'mond in either! And as to shawls, Miss Lyndon says there was not one worth the carriage; and yet she never seems to get anything new, never will. To be sure, she is in mourning still; longer than she need be, perhaps—that is all a matter of taste; but there are ways of smartening up black now, that come quite as cheap, and don't prevent your being quite as miserable, if you *must* be miserable. Of course I don't mean to be shocking; it is very dreadful to lose one's husband, we all know that—no, I can't say I do—really, I am such a giddy creature, and you do look so satirical, Mr. Randolph, it is high time I ran away.'

As if to lend additional *éclat* to the stranger, the weather changed suddenly; the hedges that had been buried in snow, began to thrust out dark twigs, and feel about for the spring; the north-east wind changed to the west, thaw reigned everywhere, and, as usual, everybody made the remark how much colder it felt than frost. But nature seemed determined to make up for lost time, and out came the sun, and the wind blew warm and encouraging, and as if in preparation for some great event, the snow between them was hustled, and hurried, and melted, and dried up, till a change was perceptible everywhere.

Walter might have walked all over the parish without fear of snowballing; but since his adventure, his grandfather had not allowed him to roam about alone as he had done hitherto, and many battles were waged indoors on this account. The boy felt his courage was impeached: he hated restraint of any kind, and this the more that his aunt Penny seconded Mr. Lyndon in his precautions, and called him rebellious, disobedient, and sinful for his opposition. He wouldn't walk out with grandpapa, he said, to stalk round the grounds, and measure the trees, and hear how all the property ought to be theirs, and wasn't, which he knew by heart; and if it wasn't theirs, what was the good of talking about it? He liked a good scrambling walk, and to run when he pleased and where he pleased; and if he was to be made a girl of, he could tell them it would end in his running away! This awful threat was repeated more than once to his aunt Lucy, because she listened with uplifted hands, and begged him not to say such a dreadful thing, even in joke: but Miss Penny, happening to overhear him,

treated it with mighty contempt; and a hot quarrel ensued, in which he provoked her into the taunt, that 'running away was the fashion in his family.' He was furious—what did she mean, when his papa was as brave an officer as ever lived?—did she dare to say he ever ran away? No, not his papa. Who was it then? Miss Penny evaded the question, and would fain have recalled the words; but it was too late; Adelaide was standing behind her and had heard them. She stopped Walter's clamour; by proposing to take him a walk; and when he gladly ran off to get ready, closed the door behind him, and turned to her sister-in-law.

'Whatever you have to say of me—of my faults, misfortunes, or mistakes, Penelope, say it at least openly, and to my face, but let that child alone! There is trouble enough in store for him sooner or later, which no care or love may be able to avert. Do not rob him of one safeguard, before you have a better to offer him in exchange; leave him his belief in, his reverence for, his mother! Not *here*, not from *you*, should he learn what you were telling him—what you would not have dared to tell, if——'

Her proud lip quivered, and she turned away to the window. Penelope, vexed at having said what she did, and still more vexed at having been overheard, took refuge in extra snappishness. She did not know that she had committed treason, but dear me, people did catch up one's words so now, there was no knowing when one was right or when one was wrong. She was quite sick of it, that she was; and as to telling Walter anything, as Adelaide said, whatever was disagreeable was sure to come out sooner or later, and it was always a thankless office, so she did not covet it. She had worry enough with them all, without that. And away she flounced, hurling the door to after her, and leaving Lucy, in much bodily fear, to soothe her sister-in-law as best she might.

For some minutes there was silence, Lucy not venturing to hazard a remark, but glancing anxiously at the beautiful face, with its noble outline, and dark eyes gazing mournfully far away on the distance; the pride of the stately brow relaxing as thought pressed on thought, till it drooped as if it could bear no more, and she gave a long weary sigh. At this point Lucy thought it time to begin, and did so, apologetically.

'I am sure, dear, I am very sorry——'

She started, and the involuntary gesture of her head was very like the toss of a fiery charger's mane, when a timid hand touches the bridle.

'Had *you* then a share in the insult, Lucy?'

'Oh dear, no, indeed, my dear Adelaide; I wouldn't have said an unkind thing of you, not if it was true a hundred times over. I always say, when Pen talks of it, what is the good of raking up

old grievances ? and I always shall. Young people will be young, and I am quite sure *I* should have done just as you did.'

Adelaide sighed again ; there was nothing very flattering in that reflection.

'What can people expect, you know, if they are so very strict with young folks, but that they will please themselves whenever they can ? I was always sure there was every excuse to be made for you, dear, for nobody can be more amiable and obliging, and all that, than you are—when you have your own way, I mean—when nobody contradicts you—you know what I mean. And then, after all, you were *very* young, you know.'

'Yes, I was,' she said, gently (for Lucy's consolations had rather a salutary and humbling tendency), 'and I very soon grew old afterwards. There are times in life when each year does the work of five ; but the pulse stops all the sooner. I was young enough to do wrong—old enough never to have forgotten it ; and my home, Lucy—when you make *that* an excuse for my disobedience, you little know what a home it once had been !'

'Of course, dear, I did not mean to say you were not happy at home—everybody is—how happy we all are here ! but then, when a young woman marries, you know, she always gives up her home enjoyments ; it is her duty. I am sure, Penelope, fond as she is of us all, would sacrifice us all without a murmur, if she was going to be married, because it would be her duty ; and not only her duty, it would be a pleasure, of course – a great pleasure, and it ought to be. And then, my dear, I must say, though he was my brother, poor fellow, I always thought poor dear Walter much more to blame than——'

'Stop !' said Adelaide, strongly agitated, and Lucy stopped with a gasp. 'I can bear anything else, but not that. From no living lips will I hear a word of blame thrown *there*. He gave me all he had, his whole, loving, confiding heart—to *me*—who caused his hardships, his early death :—to me, so unworthy, but not ungrateful for that deep, passionate devotion. My Walter ! my Walter !'

She was weeping now, and quite subdued. Lucy ventured nearer, and brought her ever-ready tears to bear her company. At this moment, Walter's eager voice was heard shouting for his mamma, and she made a hasty effort to recover self-control, and conceal the traces of emotion.

'This will not do,' she said ; 'and I hardly know how I came to give way, but sometimes the heart would burst without it. Forgive me if I have been hasty to you, Lucy : I am never so without repenting it afterwards : you are more merciful than the world you live in—you have a look of *his* sometimes, that I would gladly love and trust.'



‘My dear Adelaide, how nice to hear you say so!’ Lucy embraced her warmly. ‘You don’t know how very fond we all are of you; and I do really think, if it wasn’t for the whist, and you liked society better, and didn’t so much mind people contradicting you, and if you and Penny were not both so very clever and superior, we should be the happiest little party in the whole kingdom!’

Walter’s good-humour returned directly he was alone with his mother. She was the best companion he ever had, who would walk any distance he liked, never minding heat or cold, or mud, or dust, or cows, or gipsies, or anything! Dust and dirt never seemed to stick on her as on other people; and she was not ashamed of wearing thick boots, and a great tweed cloak that had braved as many breezes as England’s flag, and was quite past all apprehension on the score of the weather. In the spring and summer, too, she had always something entertaining to tell him about the wild flowers, and the trees, and the birds—things she told to nobody else, and that nobody else seemed to care about. Nobody had any idea how entertaining his own mamma could be when you had her all to yourself, and Aunt Penny was not by. So merrily went Walter by her side that day, looking out with an air of great defiance for his enemies, and going through the whole story of his adventure, and how he fought all the boys, and would fight them over again with pleasure, especially Stephen, he was so ridiculously ignorant! In the middle of all this, he suddenly perceived they were approaching the Balls’ cottage. He stopped short, and held his mother back.

‘Why, that is Stephen’s home, mamma—suppose he is there?’

‘Well, you will have to fight for us both, Walter, I suppose, for I can’t.’

‘But, mamma, he is so much bigger than I am.’

‘Oh, is he? Then as I doubt knowledge being power in the present instance, it may be as well we do not meet. I am only going to Sergeant Wade’s, next door.’

Walter, rather comforted by this, walked stoutly by her side, and they had just reached the old man’s gate, when the door of Ball’s cottage was flung open by a little girl, her face white with terror, who rushed out screaming violently. To Lady Adelaide’s inquiry she returned no answer, only stared violently, and ran on, roaring more lustily than before.

‘Mamma! mamma!’ cried Walter, ‘there is fire in the room!—look, look! all blazing away!’

Adelaide did look, and gave a start of horror.

‘A cradle on fire! Stay where you are, Walter,’ and with one bound she was in the cottage, tore off her cloak, and flung it on the flame, that had evidently just caught the curtains of the cradle. For

a few seconds her efforts to stifle it were ineffectual; some clothes were in a tub of water near the door—she caught up an armful and heaped them on with one hand, snatching out the infant with the other, who set up a piteous cry. It all passed in a minute, and when Walter ran in, there was only smoke, and choking smell, and Mr. Randolph's godchild safe in his mother's arms.

'Is it hurt, mamma?'

'No, thank God!' she answered, in a voice so tender, he was quite surprised, and not particularly pleased.

'You don't love that dirty baby, mamma, do you?'

She only smiled rather sadly, and hushed it by rocking herself to and fro.

'I thought you didn't like poor people, mamma?'

'These people are not poor, my boy.'

'Not poor, in this horrid poky little house?'

'No, Walter—for *their little ones live!*'

The boy looked at her in silent perplexity.

He had a dim recollection of some baby sister he used to hear about, and of a time of trouble in which he was forbidden to mention her; and once, when he saw a tiny curl in his mother's desk, he had been told it was his little angel sister's hair; but this was all, and it was a subject on which he had thought very little. Now it seemed to occur to him of what she was thinking, and his eyes grew very large and full, as he came timidly up to her, and looked wistfully in her face.

'Don't your little ones live too, mamma?'

She stooped quickly, and kissed him. 'My great, rough, curly locks, do you call yourself a little one? Run and see if any of this poor thing's family are coming to take care of it.'

Walter ran readily, and Adelaide looked down at her charge, which was nearly asleep. The gnawing sorrow of the bereaved mother was keenly at work within her; that wild and bitter repining, that will ask in its rebellion, why this child should have been saved, and that one lost. She forgot where she was—forgot the smells, the want of cleanliness, the smoky atmosphere, that had repelled her so often; her mind was far away, living over again in a moment what in endurance seemed years—the long trying hours of watching and nursing, and desperate wrestling with Heaven and with death—the agony of the final overthrow, when the heavens above seemed brass, and the earth beneath seemed iron: the paralyzing stupor of hopelessness, when she last turned away from the narrow bed, on which the fierce Eastern sun might burn and blaze, but could never warm the little hand, or flush the wasted cheek again. She saw, felt all this, without ceasing for a second her gentle, mechanical lulling of the child; and how short

or how long a time it had lasted she knew not, when she was roused by the stern, rough face of the old soldier in the doorway, watching her with a peculiar expression. The moment she looked his way, his forefinger was up to his forehead. 'Did you save it, my lady?'

'Yes, sergeant, I was just in time.'

'More than they deserve, leaving a helpless bairn like that with only a slip of a lass to see to it; and *you*, my lady, of all people, to be the one to save it. Ay, the Bible folk would say you had heaped fire on their heads by plucking their child out of it; but they'll not thank you, not a bit.'

'I do not wish for thanks, sergeant, only to be relieved from my charge. Will the mother soon be home?'

'Ay—yonder she comes.' And the sergeant, nothing loth, stepped back to meet Mrs. Ball, returning in happy unconsciousness from a comfortable gossip with a neighbour, and bringing Mary Steadiman and her own cousin Betty home to see the baby. At the sight of such a visitor coming out of her garden gate, she gave a shriek of rage and fear. 'What business have *you* in my house when I'm out of it? What do you want, I say?'

'To tell you, woman, *your* business is at home. Go in and see *why*; what did I warn you of the other night?—do you remember?' Without waiting for an answer, he strode past her, and into his own premises.

A moment the dismayed woman paused, breathless with dread of what she should see; then in a sort of desperation burst into her cottage, and found herself in the presence of Lady Adelaide.

What she had expected to find she could not tell, but it certainly was not this; her first impulse was to start back, and her next to spring rudely forward, and snatch her baby out of the lady's arms.

'Give her to me; give her to me this minute!'

'Certainly,' said Lady Adelaide, somewhat taken aback. The woman hugged it passionately, and of course it began to whimper. 'It is a pity you woke it up,' remonstrated Lady Adelaide; 'I had just hushed it off.'

'Much obliged to you, my lady, I'm sure! Nobody axed your ladyship to trouble yourself, but of course it's a great honour to us poor folks, and we ought to be humbly thankful. Maybe some people would say as a *real* lady would stop till she *was* axed, and not come prying and peering into an honest man's house when nobody's at home, and bringing sinful godless old creatures in with her, that no decent body can abide to speak to, let alone live in their houses; but I'm very much obliged to you, my lady, I'm sure, and I'm only sorry you have been and given yourself so much trouble, that's all, my lady! It's all an honour, baby, isn't it? and we're

much obliged to her ladyship, aren't we, my precious lamb? and if another time she is good enough to bring in a friend with her, we'll only take it kindly if it be anybody but Sergeant Wade!

She had turned her back on her visitor, flinging and tossing her baby as she spoke; and much too excited by terror and passion to listen to Lady Adelaide's gentle attempts at explanation or apology. The two younger women, who had just come in, looked on in silent dismay. Mrs. Ball's tongue was no novelty to them; but such treatment of my lady was a breach of manners that scandalized Mary Steadiman. She was just beginning to remonstrate, at the risk of turning the storm upon herself, when a new light was thrown on the whole matter by the breathless entrance of Stephen and his little sister; Walter being behind them, but only glancing exultingly in at the door.

'The baby! the baby! Who put out the fire? Oh, there's mother! Oh! mother, is it much burnt?'

'Burnt!'

'Ay—so Sally said; she saw the cradle all in a blaze, and run to tell you, but didn't know where you'd got to. To be sure, what a fright she gave me! I thought the little 'un would be like a roasted 'tatur by this time.'

'Burnt!' repeated the mother; and as with one impulse, all looked round for the cradle. Sure enough, there it was, upset under a heap of wet clothes, the wicker all charred, and the curtain and part of the sheet reduced to tinder; and a cloak—scorched and singed—evidently used to quench the flame: whose was that?

'Mine, thank you,' said Lady Adelaide, quietly taking it from Stephen's hands.

'*Yours*, my lady?' There was a dead silence; she drew the cloak over her shoulders, and moved to the door.

'Now, Mrs. Ball,' gasped Mary, 'say something to her—say you're sorry—you're obliged—or something! Don't let her go like that, without so much as a civil word, after all!'

But Mrs. Ball seemed for once struck dumb; and Lady Adelaide, whether she heard or not, passed on without turning her head.

It so happened, that Sophy Home, finding it rather difficult to supply her guest with sufficient occupation for his restless energies after he had set the clock going, which never went before, and cut up some dozens of billets of wood, and mended the lock of a door, and the castor of her grandfather's chair; and had written for his own amusement, and read aloud for hers, and yet still looked restless as ever, and unable to sit still—had proposed at last that they should pay a visit to his patients. He had told her such wonderful stories about the moral and physical cures effected by the

means he had employed ; and had laid such stress on the change wrought in this particular case, by simply making a passionate woman exercise a little unconscious self-control, that Sophy's expectations of the result were raised high. Mrs. Ball in a state of seraphic repose, sounded, to be sure, like an impossibility—but then, so did half Mr. Randolph's adventures, which grandpapa said were not a whit the less true for being impossible. She walked by his side, therefore, in undoubting faith, listening to his arguments for the infallibility of his system, till they came at once within sight of the cottage, and within hearing of the voices of its inmates. The shrillness of the latter made Mr. Randolph involuntarily quicken his pace, with rather a disconcerted air ; and Mrs. Ball the next minute flew to meet him at the door, her eyes red and swollen, and her voice cracked with eager talking. ' Oh dear sir ! oh *dear* sir ! thank goodness you are come ! Such a thing has happened, and I don't know what to do, nor what to say, nor what will be the upshot of anything in this world no more, I don't ; everything seems to go all nohow, and I'm just that crazy, I am.'

' Then you are just that very wrong,' said Mr. Randolph, sharply ; ' put out your tongue.' She obeyed. ' Keep it out till I tell you to draw it in ;' and he took out his watch very gravely, and counted the seconds. ' That will do, don't speak ;' and out came his phial-box, and he put a drop into a glass of water, and told her to sip that six times very slowly. All was done in silent submission ; her husband, who had risen from the chimney-corner as they entered, eyeing the process with a dubious, half-amused air.

' This will *never* do,' said Mr. Randolph, after a deliberate examination of her face, as it cooled gradually down ; ' you neglect my positive orders, and then you expect me to cure you. How often did you take your medicine, as I desired, to-day ?'

' Oh there, sir, I quite clean forgot it, that's the truth ; and so would you, if you'd been skeared as I was, and met Sergeant Wade coming out of your home, and then found my lady in it !'

' Ay,' put in her husband, ' but mappen the gentleman wouldn't have turned her out again, as you did.'

' Now, don't you meddle and make, Jem ! It be no affair of *yours*. You don't know nothing about it—you never was a mother, and arn't like to be, so you'd best hold your tongue. A mother feels, and when she feels, she's angry, and when she's angry, she outs with it, and I telled my lady so to her face—I did.'

' And what had my lady done ?' asked Sophy, impatiently, ' for I'm sure she would not hurt a fly, if she could help it.'

' Ay, just tell 'em that, mistress,' said Jem.

' Why, that's just what it is, Miss Home—it's just that upsets me so, and there's Jem, he never helps one, only sits there on the

settle, and won't stir a foot to get one out of trouble—just like them all——'

'Take care, Mrs. Ball,' interrupted Randolph, 'you will destroy the effect of the medicines if you talk fast.'

'Then I won't, sir, thank you kindly—but,' very deliberately, 'you see, I left our little Sally to mind the baby, and a very good lass she is, generally, but somehow, there's always bad luck in this house now, since we got such a neighbour. I had made a bit of a curtain for the cradle when it was so cold, and Sally says she had been twirling a lighted stick, like brother, and presently the curtain was all in a blaze, and out she ran, screaming, to find me.'

'How come you to be out of the way?' inquired Jem.

'Just you mind your own affairs: I had business, and that's enough. Well, sir, it seems my lady was going next door, as she do often, you must know, sir—and I only hope as all's right as goes on there, but he's a awful creature, to be sure, is Sergeant Wade. Well, sir, my lady must have seed the fire, and run in, and throwed her cloak over it; leastways the cloak was all singed, and there was a hole in her white sleeve, as big as an egg, Miss Home.'

'And so,' said Mr. Randolph, 'this lady saved your baby's life, and when you came in you abused her for it. But of course, when you saw your mistake you apologized.'

'No, sir, that's just where it is—I'm no great talker, that I may say for myself' (Jem grunted doubtfully), 'and I was that taken aback, I could not say a word; and my lady, she wouldn't stop to hear what one had to say, but looked very hard at me and the baby with them great shining eyes of hers, that I seemed to feel right through me; and her face turned very white—and out of the house she went, saying nought to nobody.'

'Well, she could scarcely be expected to do less,' said Randolph; 'but what surprises me is, that you should suppose for a moment a lady would come into your cottage with any but a friendly intention.'

'Well, sir, if it had been any other of the ladies—but you see my lady is so high and so distant, she thinks it beneath her to set foot in anybody's house, they tell me: and she looks upon all us poor working people as rubbish and dirt, and can't abide the sight on us: so Betty says—my cousin, you know, Miss Home—and she was housemaid up at the House, and she ought to know. And then that Sergeant Wade is such a wicked old man—and nobody goes near him but my lady, and I've heard some of the ladies say, their own selves, if *they* was her, they should know better than to demean themselves by sitting with an old sinner as never shaved or went to church.'

'This lady seems singularly unpopular among you: the first thing I saw on my arrival was her little boy being pelted.'

'Ay, sir,' said Jem, coming forward, and speaking in a resolute tone; 'but I'm thinking that won't be again; the Squire spoke to me about it, and the landlord too, and I've promised the lads such a hiding next time as they'll not forget this side Christmas. And as to my lady, I never heard of her doing any harm if she han't done much good, and I don't know why she shouldn't please herself. Mappen they wore big beards in the Ingies, and she likes it for old acquaintance: leastways, she saved the little 'un and wer'n't thanked for it, and she won't pay us a visit again in a hurry.'

'And whose fault is it, pray?' broke in his wife. 'Any man but yourself, that was half a man, would ha' run up to the House, and got a word with the Squire, or one of the ladies, and they'd ha' telled my lady how it was.'

'No, mistress, not I: it's your own scrape, and I'll have nought to do with it. It's the first time anybody were so treated in my house, and I'd be right ashamed to look the Squire in the face, so I should.'

Mrs. Ball's tears began to flow afresh, and she entreated Mr. Randolph to tell her what to do. Would he speak for her to my lady?

'Nay,' said he, 'if she is so proud and distant as you say, she will not allow a stranger to interfere. I have not yet had the honour of an introduction.'

'But you will this evening,' said Sophy, eagerly, 'and I am sure she will be glad to hear it; and it is a great shame that people say such things of her, for she is always very kind to me, and I love her very much indeed. I am sure you would, Mr. Randolph, if you knew her, and what she has gone through, and how brave and clever she is. Oh yes, Mrs. Ball, it will all be set right; don't be afraid, only cheer up, and let me see the dear little baby—you may trust it in my arms—grandpapa says I am as steady as a little old woman.'

The baby was produced, nursed, and duly admired. Randolph took it in his turn, as it seemed to be expected of him, bent over it, and kissed its little forehead. 'Take more care of that precious charge, my friend,' he said, as he gave it to its mother; 'hers is a singular destiny—God make it a happy one!'

## CHAPTER V.

Parlez, n'est ce pas vrai?—depuis ces dix années  
 Vos doigts frais ont cueilli bien des roses fanées;  
 Bien des pleurs ont noyé votre sein amolli,  
 Et sous plus d'un éclair ce beau front a pâli.  
 Oui, vous avez connu la lutte avec les choses—  
 L'arbre a blanchi le sol de fleurs à peine écloses,  
 Et la source, au sortir du rocher paternel,  
 A géni bien long-temps sans réfléchir le ciel.  
 Je sais tout; j'ai tout lu dans cet œil doux et tendre—  
 J'ai tant souffert aussi que je dois vous comprendre.—*Ste. Beure.*

THE evening came, and the company; and the drawing-room at the Manorhouse was lighted up, as far as its dark paper and curtains would bear lighting, and the tea was making in the best silver teapot, and the silver urn was hissing and steaming, as much as to say there was plenty more where that came from, so you need not spare it; and Mr. Lyndon was in gracious, patronizing mood, as a chieftain receiving the homage of his clan—smiling courteously to the ladies, and when he did lay down the law to the gentlemen, laying it on velvet. Miss Lyndon was brave in crimson satin, and a *coiffure* of gold and silvery tissue. Lucy's hair was full of artificial flowers that looked as if they had been planted a long time ago, and had run wild for want of proper cultivation. The ladies of Cannymoor were all in their best—*i. e.* their most expensive dresses, wherein colour and variety answered the purpose of taste. More pains than usual had been taken to leave a gorgeous impression on the mind of the stranger, and the result more than answered their expectations. Among other fashions set by the Miss Lyndons, who piqued themselves on various old-world pieces of knowledge, of which distillery was one, was the habit of using powerful scents; a taste that had grown to such a height in Cannymoor, that it seemed to be an object of rivalry among the ladies who should invent or introduce the newest, strongest, most unexpected odour. On the present occasion, everybody's ingenuity had been at work. Mrs. Grayling bore about her ample skirts a strange combination of lavender and apples; Miss Sweetman's was decidedly orange-peel; Miss Lyndon favoured patchouli; while otto of roses, vanille, and musk, in every degree of potency, and more or less mingled with the aroma of an apothecary's counter, seemed to reign everywhere. On the whole, to speak candidly, though a banquet for Peris, and to chemists a field of research, the combined bouquet might be considered rather too powerful to be agreeable, and that



Lady Adelaide Lyndon thought so was pretty generally understood. It was one of the many points on which she was at issue with her sisters-in-law and society, and she had early given mortal offence by pronouncing it a vulgar custom. It was no use her pleading that perfumes gave her headache; *that* was set down as affectation and pride. 'If we were all dukes and duchesses,' Miss Lyndon said, 'she would think it the wholesomest and most delicious thing in the world; it is entirely the spirit of contradiction.' So to show their opinion of her contumacy, it was rather a point of discipline with the visitors at the Manorhouse to use rather more than usual.

The guests were all assembled, with the exception of Mr. Spindler and his cousin, and the party from the rectory. When at last they arrived, they all came together, minus Dr. Home, who, after keeping them waiting while attending to one applicant after another, had been obliged to send Sophy (invited to please Walter) under Mr. Randolph's care, and promise to follow when he could. By a singular coincidence they fell in with the other late comers, and it would be too invidious to attempt to describe what sensations were caused by seeing Miss Chatterley enter on the arm of the stranger.

The welcome of the latter was of so flattering a kind, it was no wonder, as the ladies remarked, that he appeared rather flurried. It was enough to make any man nervous, and they liked him all the better for being overcome. They little knew how nervous he really was; that the room, with its medley of scents, and still greater medley of colour, with its rustle of best gowns, and hum of indefatigable voices, was to him, as he entered, like a phantasmagoria, or an uneasy dream of ever-changing shapes; that there was a spell upon his will and senses, making every response and movement mechanical—until he found himself in the centre of a hushed and expectant circle, where Mr. Lyndon, in his most chieftainlike style, was presenting 'my new friend, if I may call him so, Mr. Randolph, to my daughter-in-law, Lady Adelaide Lyndon.' A low bow—a quiet curtsy—a few polite words, he knew not what—and that was over. They had met again.

The business of tea-drinking at Cannymoor was by no means the light matter it is generally supposed to be, with cups of half-cold liquid handed round, accompanied by wafer slices of bread and butter: it was a solemn and a serious thing, to be approached only with an earnest, hearty desire to do your best in getting through the work cut out for you. The endless succession of hot cakes, that 'came and went like the simoom'—let us hope with less unpleasant consequences—would have astonished the traveller, had he not been too much of a traveller to be astonished at anything.

With Miss Sweetman on one side, and Miss Chatterley on the other, his politeness was largely drawn upon, besides the constant calls from other members of the party, who felt defrauded by the two skilful ladies in the appropriation of the public property. The possession of a good complexion, uncertain whity-brown curls, and a pair of light-blue eyes, which, for fear of looking too clever, usually seemed to be just dropping off into a comfortable nap, had long ago established Miss Sweetman in the dignity of the beauty of the party, as Miss Chatterley was admitted to be the wit. Little chance had the former in conversation; but what her rival attempted in rapid skirmishes, she accomplished by slow blockade.

*Miss Chatterley.*—‘Now, Mr. Randolph, I see, by your eye, you are going to say one of your clever, sarcastic things; you men are such observers—and travellers worst of all. I know I am quite afraid of sitting near you, that I am. I am in a dreadful fright that I shall see myself in your next volume of adventures. No, don’t say you are not going to write one; people always do who travel—they go on purpose, and I am quite looking forward to reading it. Mind you put us all in; do not leave out anybody. If you want a hint or two, I will help you.’

*Randolph.*—‘With such a promise success is sure; but I must take care of my reputation. Is this a very literary neighbourhood?’

*Miss Chatterley.*—‘O dear, yes, I suppose so; is it not, Mrs. Grayling? She is rather deaf, Mr. Randolph, and always particularly so after muffins. Mrs. Grayling! She is secretary and treasurer to the book club, you know, Mr. Randolph, and all the books go to her first, and we all wait till she has done with them, and anybody who chooses a book, lets her know, and she sends for it, and we don’t often get it, but that don’t signify—Mrs. Grayling! It was only last month, Mr. Randolph, the drollest mistake happened; Lady Adelaide is by way of being a great astronomer, you know, and she wanted a book for Walter, by Chambers, or somebody, about the stars, and Mrs. Grayling sent for the Star-Chamber. We were all so glad; for it was much more entertaining, of course, only too much history, which always confuses one, and wastes time. Mrs. Grayling! Thank you, Lady Adelaide, I am sure. She is certainly growing deafer. Will you tell her that Mr. Randolph wants to know if this neighbourhood is literary?’

Lady Adelaide, who sat opposite the speaker, between Mrs. Grayling and Mr. Spindler, put the question as required; her face plainly telling the answer in her own mind.

*Mrs. Grayling.*—‘Bless me, my lady—I beg your pardon. Yes, indeed, I am sure, we are a *very* literary set, very; does not your ladyship think so? I have some volumes put up, ready to send to

you, Mr. Randolph, to choose from ; sweet things, all of them, as the ladies will tell you. They have been the round of the club several times, so you may be sure they are good. You would not suppose it, perhaps, Mr. Randolph (in a plaintive voice, expressive of much tried patience), but sometimes it is not so easy to please everybody, though one tries one's best. Some of the ladies like books that make them cry, and some cannot bear them ; some hate three volumes, and some are disappointed if there is only one—some read very quickly, and want to change before other people are ready, and some complain of being hurried, and I want to please them all, and sometimes don't please anybody.'

Here the rest of the subscribers, who each in her individual capacity had contributed her full quota of grumbling, broke forth in a deprecatory chorus of praise and apology. The good old lady shook her head, and seemed but partially convinced.

'Yes, it is very good of you all to say so, but I know I am apt to make mistakes, and Lady Adelaide knows it too, I see, by her smile. Indeed, I was so vexed about your ladyship's book, so seldom as you *do* honour us with an order ; but I lost the paper on which it was written, and had to apply to Miss Lucy. But you do not know, Lady Adelaide, how stupid the people are at those book-sellers' shops ! I wrote most particularly for the last new interesting publications, and what did they do, but sent down two great lumbering volumes of the History of England, by some Scotchman or other (not Hume, for I looked to see, but I forget the name), just as if it was for a school, you know. I was really quite put out, though they do say of me that I am tolerably easy in my temper ; so I just packed them up again, and wrote rather a sharpish note, that we were not *quite* children, and would trouble them for something that grown-up people could read. I flatter myself I *was* right for once there—but dear me ! Your ladyship wanted it, perhaps, for little Walter.'

'For myself, I did,' said Lady Adelaide, resignedly ; 'it happened to be the very book I have been wishing to see.'

'No, really ; well, I *am* unlucky, and that is the truth. Another time I will keep everything that comes, even if it is history. But what was it Mr. Randolph wanted to know ? Oh,—if we were a literary set ; yes, I think I may say we are.'

'Certainly,' agreed the party in general.

'Mr. Randolph has had a fair opportunity of judging already,' said Lady Adelaide, with a slight smile, that brought her sister-in-law down upon her in a minute.

'Pray take care, Mr. Randolph, how you take up any hasty impressions. The fact is, it is now customary in the fashionable world, to which we poor country-people cannot pretend to belong,

always to sneer at everything and everybody *at home*. It looks so well and shows such good taste and kind feeling, that I am quite ashamed we are not better proficient in it.'

There was rather an awkward pause, and as naturally happens when family inuendoes are thrown out in public, everybody looked at everybody else, and tried to appear not to be looking at all. Lady Adelaide made no reply, but the glittering eyes of Maurice Randolph watched the bright colour that stole up into her face; and his heart swelled strangely within him. Miss Sweetman took occasion by the pause to murmur, softly, '*You* who have seen so much, Mr. Randolph, must be *very* difficult to please. I fear Cannymoor can have no attractions for you.'

His answer was more energetic than she could have expected, for his glance was still lingering opposite. 'So far from it, Miss Sweetman, that while Cannymoor contains the attractions it does now, I can conceive of no earthly desire beyond it.'

As this compliment might belong to everybody, it was generally applauded. 'Really!' cried Mr. Spindler, with enthusiasm, 'I could drink Mr. Randolph's health in this excellent tea of Miss Lyndon's for that patriotic speech. Positively, sir, we must make you one of us. You must be naturalized; you must take out your freedom. I tell you what I can show you to-morrow, if you want such a thing—a capital house to let, just the size to suit you, and a servant or two; with stabling for two horses, or more. Fixtures in; soft water, convenient distance from—from everything; south aspect for garden wall—you can grow anything there; quite sheltered from the winds over the moor, snug under the shelter of the Manorhouse—it was formerly part of this property, as Mr. Lyndon can tell you. You couldn't invest money better than by buying it; and it is going just now for a mere song—a shame, in fact, to let it go so cheap; but I am getting old, and I would rather not have things on my hands. I will look into the rectory to-morrow, and you and I can walk over it quietly.'

Mr. Lyndon, who had been on thorns throughout this speech, now stepped in with much dignity. 'You seem pleased with our little village, Mr. Randolph? I do sincerely hope you may find it convenient to remain among us. There is nothing more valuable than good and friendly neighbours' (bowing graciously to the company); 'and to look upon you as one would indeed gratify my family and myself in the highest degree. I believe, Penelope; I trust, Adelaide, my love, I am not saying too much?' A very smiling bow of acquiescence from Miss Lyndon; a very civil bend of the head from Lady Adelaide.

'We shall always be glad to do our best to make the Manorhouse agreeable to you; such a valuable acquisition is not met with

every day ; and if our good friend Spindler can really beguile you into swinging your hammock under my trees, why, we shall all be ready to drink *his* health as well as yours, which we may find opportunity to do by-and-by. And now, ladies and gentlemen, as it seems no use waiting any longer for Dr. Home, it is nearly time for some of us to think of our rubber. Mrs. Grayling, I know, has been ready the last half-hour.'

This hint ended the banquet, and the company was soon broken up into small knots ; some of the ladies played by Miss Lyndon's orders ; card-tables were set out for different games ; Sophy and Walter sat down in a corner to play at draughts, Lady Adelaide standing by to look on and advise both parties. Their eagerness in the mimic strife, their happily unconscious blunders, and delighted astonishment at suggestions of hers, leading to a sweep of three men at once, drew many amused eyes to watch them, and Randolph's among the rest. Mr. Spindler had fastened upon him, pouring into his ears all he had to say on investments, railways, rate of labour and wages, and the *pocket* ; and while he seemed to be giving the whole his mute attention, the traveller was able to keep his wistful gaze fixed on the group in the window, and that bending form above all. How often, in the stillness of the desert, of the prairie, amid the hum and shock of cities, or at midnight on the open sea, had that vision risen before him—unlike, and yet the same ! What he had last seen, slender, girlish, full of young hope, pride, and fire, in the opening promise of grace and beauty, he now looked upon, as graceful, as proud, as beautiful ; but so changed ! The bloom was gone, the round cheek was worn and pale, the lips were firmer and haughtier in their curves, the brow seemed higher and more stately, the eyes had a depth of thought and passion, of power and feeling, that gave them a beauty beyond shape and colour ; with strange electric influence repelling one instant what they attracted the next. Was her nature a partaker of this outward development ? Her glowing, impassioned, haughty spirit, had it grown softer, milder, humbler, in her womanly experience of vicissitude, bereavement, and care ? Or could he read in the very set of the noble features and carriage of the intellectual head, the full growth and ripeness of that pride by which 'angels have fallen ere now ?'

One thing was certain, she had forgotten him. He was to her as if he had never been ; and though his pride chafed silently as he compared the difference, he could not withdraw his eyes. The long, long thirst of years, the pining that resentment could not overcome, the disappointment, the self-blame, the keen regret, the maddening sense of insult and misconstruction, that had pursued him through his wanderings ; the moments when he had felt as if he could bear and forget everything, could he only look upon her

face once more, craved now that perilous indulgence, and would not be satisfied; even while every instant it was indulged but added fuel to the smothered fire within.

Dr. Home's hearty voice broke the spell. He came briskly in, as usual, making no apologies; glad no one had waited; he had had some tea, so he need put nobody out; and his cheerful face, as he shook hands right and left, seemed to throw a glow of good-humour wherever it turned.

'Ah, Maurice! there you are; I was looking for you. Come here with me.'

And before Randolph could resist, he had marched him up to the very corner on which his eyes had been fixed so intently.

'How are you, Lady Adelaide?' grasping her long, slender fingers in his brown, short ones, with a heartiness that left her no time for reserve, had she intended any. 'None the worse for to-day's work, I hope? Ah, I have such a lecture in store for you, but that will keep. Have you thanked my pupil here for his chivalry in behalf of yours?'

Lady Adelaide, too much accustomed to the old gentleman's manners to be disconcerted by them, turned with her usual grace to Randolph, and regretted that her not having had the opportunity earlier, made her thanks appear so much colder than her gratitude. She only wished her imprudent little boy might always find so good a friend at hand in his need.

Maurice Randolph bowed; he could not trust himself at that moment to speak. Her voice, her look, her smile, thrilled to his very soul; he could have knelt and kissed her hand, the hem of her dress, the ground she trod on; have humbled himself, body and spirit, in the dust for her high-born pride to trample on, but to have seen by a glance, by a word, by the faintest change of colour, that she remembered him. But no—he was far from her thoughts just then, and time, and travel, and sunburn, and his dark moustache, had so altered him from the man she once knew, that her eye passed from his face, unconscious and undisturbed, to rest with lingering fondness on the bright head of her boy, bending eagerly over his game.

Dr. Home looked at him too. 'Ay, ay,' said he, nodding his head, 'he will need friends enough, poor lad, if you and he go on as you have begun; so he had better make as many as he can as fast as possible.'

'He had better learn to do without them,' said Lady Adelaide.

'May I ask why?'

'That he may escape the disappointment of their failure, or their loss.'

'Lady Adelaide speaks,' interposed Randolph, gravely, 'as if her

own experience had not been particularly favourable. Yet even the chance of a true and loyal friend not proving quite equal to what one expected, or felt to deserve, would scarcely be a reason for throwing him lightly aside.'

'A true and loyal friend? but they are rare prizes, Mr. Randolph, and such as are seldom met with above once or twice in life.'

'And when met with, Lady Adelaide, are they worth attaching, worth considering, worth feeling for—or only to be kept while useful, and then as worthless flung away?'

She looked at him with a vague sense of uneasiness: something in his voice and manner disturbed her, without her understanding why; but she answered, rather coldly, that any one who so treated a friend deserved to make an enemy.

'True, most true, Lady Adelaide; but how soon an enemy is made, who can tell? A word can do it; a single word, that shows him his fidelity is valueless—his regard taken as a matter of course—his claim on reciprocal steadfastness presumption. Friendship requires and implies equality, as no one knows better than your ladyship. No wonder your friends are so few.'

'Now that is all nonsense,' said Dr. Home, unceremoniously, without noticing how her countenance had darkened at Randolph's words. 'Lady Adelaide has friends like other people, but she will not acknowledge them. There is Sophy for one, who thinks she can do no wrong; and Colly for another, who says my lady is a born angel; and myself for a third, who prove my friendship by telling her plain truths when necessary; do I not, my dear?'

'Not so often as I deserve, sir.'

'If that is spoken sincerely, it does you credit, and I have half a mind to say at once what I want to say. Are you disposed for a plain truth at this moment?'

She coloured a little, but smiled, as she professed herself strong enough to bear anything he could have to say.

'Then, in the first place, I am not at all pleased that the earliest impression a visitor of mine receives on arriving here, should be to the discredit of us all; and *you* the original cause.'

'I, Dr. Home?' replied she, more hurt than she cared to show; 'what have I done?'

'That I leave for you to tell *me*. In the second place, I do not like to hear that when a lady goes into a cottage in my parish, she is supposed to be there as an intruder, and treated accordingly—the fault being her own.'

'I see, Dr. Home,' said Lady Adelaide, struggling not to appear offended, 'you are anxious to show your friend, Mr. Randolph, how rigidly you maintain your pastoral discipline. I might have been sure the story of my going into Mrs. Ball's house would have been

half over the parish by this time ; but it is only fair you should know I ran in, as any one else would have done, to save her child, and certainly had no expectation of being so insolently treated as to prevent my ever troubling her again. If the fault be mine, I am sorry ; but as it is only in keeping with the general temper of the people in this place, I fear I must be much more deeply implicated than I was aware of.'

'So you are, my dear,' said Dr. Home. She began to lose patience, especially when Randolph smiled.

'It is mortifying, no doubt,' she said, with a scornful glance round the room, 'to be marked out as the unpopular member of a society, and it appears all are agreed in fixing the stigma on me, so I must bear it as best I may. Happily, it is of very little consequence what such people say or think.'

'Certainly,' said Mr. Randolph ; '*such people* are not required to think at all. If there are any who presume to censure Lady Adelaide Lyndon, she has only to pass them without notice.'

'I do not see that at all,' said the uncompromising old rector ; 'some of the ladies here are as good, well-meaning souls as ever lived, and do not care how much trouble they take to show a kindness, or what they intend for one. They do good, too, in their way, and the poor know it ; and Lady Adelaide has only to try to become as popular as the best of them.'

'I have no ambition to be popular,' said Lady Adelaide, 'and as you set the example of plain speaking, Dr. Home, you will permit me to doubt the amount of good done in that way. Far as I am from depreciating true benevolence, or from remaining insensible to the beauty of Christian charity, I have yet to be convinced that they consist in intruding into poor people's rooms at all hours, and gossiping with them about all that goes on in the village. If they do, I may well despair, for such a virtue I can never attain.'

*Randolph*.—'Why should you ? Rank and education can have nothing in common with meanness and ignorance.'

*Lady Adelaide*.—'I did not say so. I should be sorry to think so. Where I could do any real good, I hope I should not hesitate, but——'

*Randolph*.—'But your sympathy, your friendly feelings, your kind pleasure in their daily progress, those you must reserve for the few that are your equals. Well, this is natural, and not new. I have experienced it more than once. We were observing the other day, Doctor, how many customs, as well as words, may be traced to the East ; and certainly we seem to have borrowed one of their leading institutions—that of *caste*.'

*Dr. Home*.—'Caste, eh ! do you think so ? I doubt it. You



would be uncommonly puzzled to make a Brahmin of me, with a good beefsteak in my way.'

*Randolph*.—'Yet you have your mysteries, your craft secrets, no doubt, into which you would be sorry to let the uninitiated penetrate, lest their reverence for the sermon be impaired by hearing how you grumble when writing it.'

*Dr. Home*.—'Go to, you are a saucy lad! Grumble? and who would not grumble, and lustily too, who had to preach sermons Sunday after Sunday, and see nobody a bit the better for them? Yes, my dear Lady Adelaide, you shake your head as if you were surprised at my saying so here; but, my dear, you are just as bad as the rest, so do not look as if I only meant other people.'

*Lady Adelaide*.—'Only as bad as the rest? that is some encouragement, for I understood I was a great deal worse. But I am not quite clear what Mr. Randolph means.'

*Randolph* (after a pause).—'The truth is, all classes are ambitious. The friendship of their own circle is not enough for them; they must have a hold on the one immediately beyond; the poor man does not only look for Christmas doles and subscription bounties—he wants a shake of the hand, and a smile of good-will, or he feels defrauded of the best part of the gift. The educated ranks share the same desire, but there it is harder to gratify. Those raised higher than their fellows shrink from the possibility of their ever being on a level. They will show them a kindness, do them a favour, protect, support, be courteous to them, so long as they keep within the magic boundary that society traces out; but attempt to pass that line—look for sympathy, for communion, for the equality between man and man, without which no real depth of feeling can be maintained in minds of equal power—and all is over at once between you, and the world says it serves you right. Is not this an European form of caste, rivalling the old laws of Brahmin and Pariah?'

*Dr. Home*.—'You must answer this, Lady Adelaide, as you know more about it than I do. Is this the case? or is it only a traveller's story?'

*Lady Adelaide*.—'I own I should have expected more liberality, more real knowledge of the world, from a traveller and a man of literature. It may be the popular side of the question, but scarcely the true one.'

*Randolph*.—'You think not, Lady Adelaide?'

*Lady Adelaide*.—'Certainly. I deny that real merit is less appreciated by one educated class than by another.'

*Randolph*.—'Yet the experience of hundreds would tell you a different tale.'

*Lady Adelaide*.—'The experience of *one* would be sufficient;

only spare me the hackneyed, overdrawn pictures of the popular writers of the age, who seem to have taken up one unhappy specimen as a type, and argue from his singular and peculiar deformities on the formation and habits of the whole species.'

*Randolph.*—'I will keep to known facts. You think I am prejudiced, but the prejudice was bred in my family from the fate of one of its most beloved members, handed down to us in old letters and recollections. His was such a case as Tennyson loads with such withering sarcasm—as Crabbe's iron pen has graven on the rock for ever. A youth of talent and promise, a noble patron, a haughty beauty, who yet deigned to encourage his timid admiration, and admit him to the intimacies of social intercourse, allowing him to believe himself her equal and friend—form the outlines of his story as we trace it first. The end is one that Lady Adelaide's gentle experience will discredit. She judges by her own benevolent nature, that would scorn to raise so high merely to fling so low. But such was his doom—a dazzling daydream—a midnight awakening, where there was darkness and gnashing of teeth. Lured on to hope against hope, his reason slept, his honour was silenced; and the wild confession was wrung from his soul as he flung himself helplessly on her mercy. What mercy did he receive? That bitterness of punishments for too credulous faith, which no man deserving the name can forgive—a scornful, contemptuous laugh, pitying his delusion, and advising him to be content with his own station and his equals. So they parted. That lady lived long, married, brought up children, died respected among friends and relations, whose reverent admiration inscribed on her monument, that she had never failed in a single duty incumbent on her exalted station.'

*Dr. Home.*—'And the poor soft lad——'

*Randolph.*—'He shot himself.'

*Dr. Home.*—'Ugh! worse, and worse. I fear he was one of those idolaters whom Scripture calls fools.'

*Randolph* (in a low, emphatic tone).—'Yes, it was a fool's part he played. He should have lived—I would have done so in his place—lived, and worked, and risen in the world in defiance of everything; and then, when I, too, had wealth, and power, and influence, I would have sought her out, and stood in her path, wherever it led, and tried whose pride would be humbled soonest—hers or mine!'

He looked full in Lady Adelaide's face as he spoke; their eyes met fixedly; a stern smile was on his lips, and every feature glowed with the deep passion curbed so long. On hers the effect was electrical; all the undefined associations his voice and appearance had been calling up that evening, suddenly took distinctness and

coherency ; and he read in one glance that he was recognized. Her start, the paleness of her first surprise, the deep-dyed blush of the second recollection, the involuntary impulse to spring forward and greet him by name, checked as suddenly by the dark hostility of his look—all passed in a moment, but not one unmarked by him, to whom it seemed as if the first drop of the cup his evil angel had so often held up before him, was cooling the fierce thirst of his soul.

If the discovery itself took Lady Adelaide by surprise, his manner evidently confounded her—for she stood motionless, gazing on him with an emotion in which fear contended with pride, and sorrow prevailed over both ; unable to utter a word, or withdraw her eyes, though borne down, in her own despite, by the commanding sternness of his. At that moment, before Dr. Home, whom Randolph's last speech had struck painfully, could interpose the rebuke he intended on its false principle, Miss Penelope stepped lightly up to the party.

‘I am sorry to interrupt all this pleasant conversation, but my father cannot make up his rubber without one of us ; and as I cannot be spared, my dear, perhaps you will not mind sitting down for a little while, till I come and relieve you ? He has secured Mrs. Grayling and Mr. Spindler, so you will be a first-rate quartette. Do you hear me, Adelaide, my dear ?’

Her voice dispelled the dream in which her sister-in-law was lost. She turned in a startled, nervous manner that made Miss Lyndon ask, laughing, ‘If Mr. Randolph had been terrifying her with any of his amazing stories ?’

‘Mr. Randolph has certainly surprised me very much,’ replied Lady Adelaide, in a voice studiously calm and measured ; ‘more so than I could have believed possible.’

Randolph bowed low. ‘I may yet have the honour of proving to your ladyship that many things are possible in which you have never believed.’

She looked at him for a moment with her haughty head flung back, and her eyes glowing ; then turned away in silence. Some of the party joining them, now absorbed the attention of the rector, and Randolph was drawn by his fair hostess to a seat near the piano, where they could converse under cover of the music. Her eyes followed the wandering glance of his. ‘I dare say you thought me very selfish in such a proposal ; but we must all take our share in the entertainment of our friends ; and Lady Adelaide prefers cards to joining in our conversation and music. The worst of it is, between ourselves, she is apt to lose her temper ; but that will happen to the best players, we know.’

‘Lady Adelaide ought to be a good whist player,’ said Randolph, ‘if she inherits General Conway's skill with his fortune.’

‘His fortune! She inherited very little of *that*, I assure you! It is little enough we are the better for the wealth of her family. Do you know them at all?’

‘I had the honour of some acquaintance with them, some years ago—before Lady Adelaide’s marriage.’

‘Ah, indeed! Do you think her at all altered since then?’

‘Very much.’

‘I suppose she really *was* very handsome in her youth?’

‘She was considered so.’

‘Well, I can easily believe it: indeed, there are still some remains of good looks when she is pleased, which is not so often as, I am sure, I do my best that it should be. Poor thing! she has had trials, you know, and we remember that, and bear with her.’

‘Does Lady Delaunay often visit these parts?’

‘Lady Delaunay! no, indeed.’ Miss Penelope coughed, looked mysterious, and as if she wished it to be understood she could tell a great deal if she chose, but nothing should make her choose, if it was ever so. Randolph looked at her eagerly.

‘I am indiscreet, perhaps, Miss Lyndon; but from the little I formerly knew of Lady Delaunay, I conjecture enough to make me more curious than I have a right to be.’

‘Well, Mr. Randolph, it is only natural, and if you do not hear it from me, you are sure to do so from other quarters—though we do not talk about it, you know: what good would it do? But the real truth is, her family have never forgiven her marrying without their consent.’

‘Was that the case?’ asked he, with a flushed cheek.

‘Why, yes—there is no denying what everybody knows. She was very young, which is a great excuse; and my poor brother was too much in love to be prudent; but it was a sad affair for *us*. His prospects were excellent: our family interest—my father’s name—in short, there was everything in his favour; but owing to this unfortunate attachment, her family persecuted him, and had his regiment ordered to India, thinking to put a stop to it altogether; upon which they got privately married, and she went to India with him.’

‘And was she happy?’ asked Randolph, abruptly; then recollecting himself, ‘I beg your pardon, your goodness makes me presume.’

‘Not at all, Mr. Randolph, not at all. Happy! yes, I suppose they were; but it was not likely she should understand managing an income, and of course her ideas were extravagant. I do not blame her, poor thing! but, somehow or other, the best part of her fortune was spent; and when my poor brother died, she and her boy had no resource but to come here: they have no other home—

quite dependent upon us, and a great charge it is, I assure you. Not that I grudge it to them; far from it: but one would like to see a little appreciation, a little deference, a little acknowledgment of all one does: one cannot help wishing *that*, though I put up with a vast deal more than I ought, for poor dear Walter's sake, and the love of peace and quietness.'

'She must have gone through a great deal,' said Randolph, whose eyes had wandered again to the card-table, and lingered on the form, whose noble profile was turned towards him, with its quiet look of weariness, and delicate worn cheek, on which the long dark lashes rested—'a great deal of hardship and exertion, as well as sorrow.'

'Of course she has: my brother was one of the most promising officers in the service, and he got a command through a friend of hers, and she went everywhere with him, and what she saw and did, nobody knows, for she will not tell one anything; and the servant she brought over, whom you have heard us talk of, was too fond of rhodomontading to be believed. I always told her she humoured that fellow too much; I could not like him myself, though I may have been wrong. However, everybody was very sorry for her, and all that; and at first it was very natural and right that she should have little taste for society, and no spirits to be agreeable; but when it comes to the third year, I do think it is time to have some regard for other people's comfort. If it is all love for my brother, I suppose I ought not to grumble: I loved him myself, Mr. Randolph' (the tears stood in her eyes as she spoke), 'that I did: but I was decently civil to my friends all the same; so I must be allowed to have my doubts about it's being all sorrow for *him*.'

'Lady Adelaide's spirits, perhaps, have never recovered the shock of the bereavement.'

'No, I suppose not: that is the polite and genteel way of putting it. Fashionable ladies are only low-spirited—never cross. In anybody else it might be called by a stronger name; but those who think themselves so very superior to everybody else, that it is a condescension to sit in the same room with them, ought not to be under obligations to them—ought they, Mr. Randolph? However, we all make allowances for her: she really has some very good points about her when you come to know her, and we only smile at her little infirmities of temper, and excuse them as best we can to our friends. Only we cannot make her popular, you know, Mr. Randolph.'

Randolph assented silently, and Miss Sweetman's song, to which they had never thought of listening, being now ended, it was necessary to be very grateful to her for singing it. As she modestly and blushing retired, her place was filled by a young gentleman, whom Randolph had already remarked as wearing very long hair, painfully brushed off his temples, and hanging over his neckcloth;

and as having a peculiarly dreamy pair of eyes, that had made him set him down as, in all probability, the village poet. In this he was mistaken : would nature but have allowed to Mr. Ousel the mechanical skill of rhyming, it would have saved him and others a world of trouble, and relieved him of a load of pent-up emotion. As it was, his genius took a different turn, and he had for some time assumed the musical dictatorship of Cannymoor, where he was looked upon as a second Mendelssohn, at least. He rather affected the graces which fame and novel writers have ascribed to that composer ; piqued himself on doing nothing that he could not do well ; was proud of his white hands, and high forehead, and the refinement of his habits ; and from time to time, produced a series of melancholy pieces of music, bearing the name of ' Silent Shadows ' (rather a vague one, since shadows are not usually remarkable for loquacity), which were circulated in MS. as a great favour among the ladies of Cannymoor, and pronounced fully equal to the ' Lieder ohne Worte.' The peculiarity of these ' Silent Shadows,' wherein lay their great charm, was that, as they scorned the vulgar appliances of tune, melody, and so forth, they were capable of being made to bear any meaning the audience or the performer liked best ; and if you only forbore to read the titles of the numbers, it made very little difference whether you heard ' The Dream,' ' The Waking,' ' The First Hope,' or ' The Last Despair.' He had made a desperate effort at one time to reform the Cannymoor church music, and displace what he called ' the common-place vulgarity of the old psalm and hymn tunes,' by a style of chanting of his own devising ; but the village choir were too stubborn and too deep-chested for him, and it required all the blunt sense and good-humour of Dr. Home to keep the peace between the rival schools of harmony. As it was, the choir sang louder, slower, and with longer-drawn cadences than usual, when Mr. Ousel was at church ; while Mr. Ousel, with his arms folded, and his long hair falling over his shoulders, gave the world to understand, that if he compromised his principles by enduring ' Mount Ephraim,' ' Hanover,' and ' Cambridge New,' it was entirely under protest, and out of respect to the clergyman.

The ' Silent Shadows ' were for some time a puzzle to his admirers, and many wild conjectures were hazarded as to their object and meaning ; but of late the secret had been divined, and it was now pretty freely circulated, in confidential whispers, that they formed an autobiography of a hopeless passion for Lady Adelaide. Hopeless it might well appear to be, considering the intense fear and awe he had of her presence, and the disheartening manner in which his existence was generally ignored ; but not the least interesting on that account—nor, to do him justice, the less

sincere. *Au reste*, this gentleman was harmless enough—in great request at Cannymoor, where gentlemen were scarce; and having a naturally good voice and facility of execution, had never discovered how he spoiled the one and wasted the other by the bad taste that, more or less, invariably accompanies conceit.

On the present occasion, unconsciously stimulated by Randolph's vicinity—the rival who had stood ever since he came between him and the sun—Mr. Ousel put forth his powers; and after humouring the ladies with a favourite ballad, on which he disdained praise, opened a music-book with his grandest air, darted one glance at the whist-table, as if in the faint hope of being listened to there, and plunged most unexpectedly into Beethoven's celebrated song, '*Adelaide*.'

To some of the company this was so new, that in their innocence, they thought he had composed it for the occasion, and their only doubt was whether it was not going a little too far. It was soon evident that he was in an inspired mood, for the original text was by no means sufficient to relieve his emotions; his body rocked to and fro as if waved by the wind; his head was one minute down upon the keys, the next, jerked violently back to the terror of the beholders; while his restless feet, first on one pedal, then on another, then on both, almost resembled the action of a velocipede. All this Randolph could have borne quietly, for it was only an additional sketch in the group; but the song itself, one of his oldest favourites, was rather more than even his travelled patience could stand. Whenever the name recurred, as it does so often, Mr. Ousel found a new expression to throw into it—embodying as it were each of the Silent Shadows in turn, after the fashion set by the '*Ode to the Passions*,' according to the version of the inimitable John Parry:—

When Music, heav'nly maid, was young,  
'Twas wonderful how well she sung!

Fear blundering over the chords; Anger tearing at the lyre; Despair's woful measures; dejected Pity, and Melancholy with eyes upraised, called in turn on '*A-del-a-i-de*,' and all, as it seemed, to no purpose. Once only did she turn her head, and Randolph thought she looked at him. Did she then remember, as he did, the old days connected with that song? Did it strike her, too, in hearing it so marred in the delivery, what an analogy there was between the '*sweet notes jangled*,' and the associations once blended with them—now, too, '*out of tune and harsh*?'

He rose and moved to the card-table; Miss Penelope, who had been listening rather disparagingly to the song, which she pronounced freely to be a parcel of stuff, followed to see what was

going on. Things looked serious with her family fortunes at that moment; Mr. Spindler, who joked, and laughed, and played very fast, and saw through Lady Adelaide's hand, as if it was glass—and Mrs. Grayling, slow, methodical, almost apologizing for taking her ladyship's king, and, however she might let slip such a trifle as the name of a scientific treatise, never forgetting a card that had been played—were more than a match for Mr. Lyndon and his daughter-in-law, and showed no more respect for Conway tradition, than Napoleon's soldiers did for the tactics of le grand Frédéric. In plain English, the Manorhouse was being most disgracefully beaten, and its lord's face, when he looked at his partner, was unpleasant to behold. In justice to him, it must be confessed, she had been playing very badly, and, worse still, did not seem to have found it out.

'It is a great mistake, P'enlope, asking people to sing when whist is going on,' said he, as his daughter came up; 'it distracts your sister so, she can hardly play for listening.'

'And it is a doltful sort of ditty, too,' said Mr. Spindler; 'very fine, I dare say, but not quite to my taste. I like something more of a jig for my money; but it is treason to say so to Ousel. Cut, if you please, my lady. Now, Mr. Randolph, will you bet a sovereign on Lady Adelaide's lucky star? It is just in the ascendant.'

'I should have imagined the reverse,' said Randolph, with a smile, 'if appearances are to be believed. However, on Lady Adelaide's skill, with all my heart, if not on her star.'

But Mr. Lyndon, to whom some promising cards had just been dealt, protested pleasantly against betting, both as derogating from the dignity of whist, and also robbing his good friend Spindler of what he could very ill afford; and forthwith began his lead in hopeful spirits. But if his partner's star was in the ascendant, it must have been sad uphill work with that luminary, for everything went wrong; Randolph saw her once or twice put her hand to her head as if from a shoot of pain, but Mr. Lyndon only observed her play, and of that, the less we say the better. He could not give full vent before his guests, but when all was over, and his triumphant adversaries were reckoning up their points, he turned to Randolph, with bland politeness, congratulating him on having taken his advice.

'You were very nearly backing the wrong side, sir; I never saw anything like that—never! Upon my honour, I could not have believed it, if I had not seen it with my own eyes. How was I to suppose you had the queen of trumps in your hand after what you played before, my dear Adelaide? the game was absolutely ours! we could hardly help winning it. Not that I care twopence about



it, myself; only if one does a thing at all—hang that music! there is no hearing oneself speak—it is worth while to do it well. What *could* you have been thinking of, my dear?’

The question was easier to ask than to answer. Lady Adelaide did not attempt to answer it, but seeing plainly how much he was vexed, was beginning to offer an apology for inattention, when Mr. Spindler, with a preparatory chuckle, interrupted her by saying, ‘Mr. Lyndon ought to have known my Lady Adelaide would *play the queen*, for she *always* does.’

Penelope looked at Randolph, and smiled; his lip curled slightly: Lady Adelaide saw it, and rose from her seat, flushing crimson.

‘You will excuse my playing any more, sir; the heat of the room, and these strong perfumes,’ with a resentful glance at Mrs. Grayling’s ample pocket-handkerchief, ‘are more than sufficient reason for anybody’s want of skill. It is really almost insupportable.’

‘There, there! my dear creature,’ cried Miss Penelope, ‘say no more—nobody wants you to go on playing. It is difficult to lose with good humour, we all know. Give me your place, and do just show Mr. Randolph that Indian chess problem that puzzled us all so much; I feel convinced nothing is too puzzling for him.’

Her sister-in-law made no reply, but moved slowly away, followed after a moment’s hesitation by Randolph, to the recess where the chess-table had been set out ready for action. She seated herself beside it, *en reine*, with an air of resolute laughtiness that seemed prepared to resist to the utmost. He stood between her and the company—his arms resting on the back of a chair—his eyes fixed on her face.

‘Before I attempt to offer you a problem, sir,’ she said, after a short silence, in which, unconsciously to themselves, all the pride of their natures had time to rise to the surface, and welled even to their lips, ‘I must ask for the solution of yours. Unravel the mystery of this strange behaviour; a proceeding so unlike the Mr. Gray I once knew, as almost to make me doubt the evidence of my own senses.’

‘Madam,’ he replied, gravely and slowly, ‘the man you knew is dead. I am but his heir and executor.’

‘May I request you, sir,’ she said, impatiently, ‘to be less metaphorical; I do not profess your acknowledged skill in deciphering riddles. Answer me plainly; for what reason have you appeared here under another name, and why have you made a mystery of our previous acquaintance, and allowed yourself to be presented to me as a stranger?’

‘Plainly then, madam, in the first place, I believe it is by no

means uncommon to change a name on inheriting the fortune annexed to it; and in the second, there was nothing in the close of my acquaintance with Lady Adelaide Chester, to warrant my supposing I could be looked upon as more than a stranger by Lady Adelaide Lyndon.'

She bent her head slightly, as if accepting the explanation, and the relative position implied in it.

'I was not aware of your good fortune, Mr. Randolph; I beg your pardon, and congratulate you sincerely. When I heard of you last, you were applying for a government situation. Did you succeed in your diplomatic schemes?'

'No, Lady Adelaide, I gave them up on the very verge of fulfilment. I was disgusted with my native country, and this compulsion put the world before me, too temptingly to resist. Perhaps I was wrong, for having just learnt to disbelieve in truth, in honour, in nobility of character, wherever they looked most attractive, I was cast precisely in the mould in which statesmen are supposed to be made.'

'Ah, indeed! a second Childe Harold—rather out of date, Mr. Randolph, but not the less likely to be appreciated at Cannymoor. Never was a place better fitted to encourage your disbelief in truth, at any rate.'

'I hope so, indeed, Lady Adelaide, after what I have heard.'

She pressed her hand on her bosom; her breathing felt oppressed, and her heart fluttered painfully. The close, scented atmosphere felt like a cord round her brain.

'And what can you have heard already,' she asked, after a pause, 'that you wish so earnestly may be untrue?'

He too paused, as if this were hard to answer.

'After being away from England so long,' he said, presently, 'a man has to make up his mind to see many changes. It is only reasonable to expect them, yet no one does—I did not—and how many I have seen! There was a fine elm that had sheltered generation after generation, and looked as if it would flourish for ages yet—I found its stump only; it had decayed and fallen, and been sold—cut up, perhaps, into coffins. There was a baronial hall, whose owners dated from the Conquest; whose grey turrets had been my admiration from childhood; it had been sold, pulled down—the railway ran through the park—the materials of the building had helped to erect a parish union. There was a trout stream where I had spent many a happy morning, such as Davy might have envied—it was turned—stagnated—become a mere ditch, unsightly and unwholesome. And yet there are changes more strikingly painful than even those of the tree, the hall, and the stream; can I help wishing they were not true?'

She leaned back in her arm-chair, for a faint sickness was stealing over her more and more, though she still maintained an appearance of haughty composure.

'Time will not stand still for us, Mr. Randolph, and it is not every one who is fortunate enough, like yourself, only to make changes for the better. You hold the golden key; and halls, elm-trees, and trout-fishing are all to be had for the buying. My only surprise is that, with so much to choose from, you should have come *here*.'

'I might be surprised too, Lady Adelaide, if others, more distinguished, with far wider means of choice, had not done so before me.'

Her whitening lips quivered with the half-audible word, '*Inso-lent* !'

He seemed not to hear, and went on as if thinking aloud—

'Yes, there *is* a change; more painful to look upon, even where it is merited, than any destroyed association of nature or of home. It is where we see one, whom we remember, oh! how vividly! beloved, admired, honoured—on whom the very airs of heaven seemed to breathe reverently, as if fearful to injure so fair a thing—become the object of sarcastic compassion, the topic of petty gossip, with fine talents unemployed or wasted—with every recollection that should have ennobled a career, only rendering it the more humiliating. To look back to a point in life when all that fair promise might have been realized, and then to turn from what it might have been to what it is—oh! there is no change like *this*—and it has been mine to see it!'

'What is the matter?' cried Mr. Lyndon. A sudden gust of air swept through the room, flaring the candles and blowing away the cards. 'What are you all about? What has happened?'

A dozen voices answered at once, going on in different keys. 'It is Lady Adelaide—she is taken ill, overcome, fainting—no, only oppressed by the heat—she is better now; don't all crowd round her (everybody doing so all the time)—water! sal-volatile! smelling salts! Has nobody a vinaigrette? Here is a delicious scent—*Eau de choufleur*; no, she hates that; *bouquet éternel*—why, don't you remember how scornfully she put it from her the other day? Throw water in her face; raise her head; no, no, lay her flat on the floor; take care, Mr. Ousel, you will give her cold with so much water; beat her hands, will you? A fan! has nobody a fan? Thank you, Mrs. Grayling—that is a good large one—smells delightfully, too; what is it made of? Dear, dear, it seems to make her worse; what is to be done? Mr. Randolph, can you suggest nothing?'

Before he could reply, Lady Adelaide opened her languid eyes, raised herself in her arm-chair, and shivering from head to foot,

begged them not to trouble themselves, for she was much better. It was high time she was, poor woman ; for the kind-hearted ladies, who had forgiven her all her misdeeds directly they saw her suffering, were each bent on restoring her in her own way ; and every scent-bottle she detested most was being offered to her nose, or sprinkling on her hands, or being poured on large pocket-handkerchiefs to lay on the top of her head ; while Mr. Ousel, armed with a jug of water, stood poisoning it in his hand like a quoit, ready to launch the contents over her on the slightest provocation. She sank back in her chair, faintly imploring, ' Let me alone ; only let me alone ; ' but that was a little too much to expect from human nature.

' Poor dear ! she is subject to these fits, is she not ? Nervous ; a little over-excited to-day, no wonder ; did you hear what she did ? rushed into a blazing house, and dragged out three children.

no, no, I assure you there were but two, and she jumped with them out of window ;—was that it ? Dear ! no wonder she is shaken, and she is one of those who will never own to being ill, never ; and it is as much as your life is worth to ask how she feels. Who *is* gone for sal-volatile ? Oh, Miss Lucy has got something ; that's right. Do drink it, dearest Lady Adelaide ! it will do you so much good.'

Lady Adelaide, in helpless despair, took what was offered her ; it was something excessively nauseous—she could not conceive what : in fact it was a home-distilled compound on which Miss Lucy specially prided herself, which might have rivalled the celebrated morning draught Dr. Luke Lundin gave Roland Græme. It had its effect, however, for the very revulsion of feeling helped to recover her scattered senses ; though trembling still, she was able to rise, and attempt to make her way through her too attentive friends. They crowded round her directly she moved. ' Take my arm, dear Lady Adelaide ; no, no, let Mr. Randolph support her, he is so strong. Suppose she were to fall ? What—your ladyship would rather not ? there—you shall do as you like, poor dear. She is much better, Miss Lyndon (as Penelope, whom Lucy had forestalled, came up with a remedy), very much better, thanks to dear Miss Lucy's cordial ; are you not, dear ?'

Such affectionate language had never been employed to her before, nor was it intended for her in the abstract, but simply in her temporary character of invalid, which has this privilege among others. She endured it all passively, returned faint thanks with the grace that never forsook her, and still moved to the door, which seemed unusually far off. ' How glad I am I thought of my tincture ! ' cried Lucy, in the flush of success ; ' is it not excellent, my dear Adelaide ?'

' Only not strong enough, Lucy.'

' Oh, my love, in what way do you mean ?'

‘I mean that a very little more would have poisoned me quite, and saved further trouble.’

Lucy fell back annihilated. Dr. Home drew Lady Adelaide’s arm in his without waiting for permission. ‘After that, it is time for the church to interfere. Don’t look so scared all of you ; she only wants quiet and air ; let her rest in the hall a few minutes, and then she can come back, or go to bed, just as she pleases. Stay where you are, everybody ; *I’ll* take care of her.’

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## CHAPTER VI.

I see you what you are : you are too proud.—*Shakespeare.*

THE cold of the hall and the relief of stillness, aided by the exertions of a powerful will, soon revived Lady Adelaide ; and sorely humiliated did she appear at having been the cause of so much disturbance. She pleaded the closeness of the room, the scent, fatigue, and other sound reasons, to which her companion listened with a nod of acquiescence, studying her face intently meanwhile. Accustomed for so many years to read hearts, what he had noticed that evening—and very little passed that he did not notice—had moved his compassion strongly. He yearned to give her comfort.

‘I know what would do you good, my dear,’ said he at last.

‘No, do not propose any more remedies,’ said poor Lady Adelaide.

‘Well, well, our good ladies in there were a little over-busy, perhaps. They mean kindly, but there is no teaching them when to stop. Mine, however, is a very old-fashioned prescription, and very simple.’

He took a turn up and down the hall, and came back to where she was seated.

‘There was a child once subject to a dreadful disease—foaming at the mouth and pining away—that nothing, it was supposed, could eradicate. He was brought at last to a Physician, who showed that the only thing required was this simple remedy, which, when applied, made him well.’

‘And that was——?’

‘Wait a minute. There was another, burnt up with fever, at the gate of death : all hope extinguished ; *this* was applied, and he recovered at once.’

‘Why these are wonders, Dr. Home. You are not in earnest?’

‘Yes I am, my dear. There was a woman nobody could restore to health, whom it *did* restore ; there was a man to whom it gave sight ; there was a young girl whom it raised from the dead. It can do wonders, indeed. It does them every day.’

She looked up with a quick flush of comprehension ; but her

glance drooped beneath his, and rested on the floor. He laid his hand on hers, and his voice softened into tenderness. 'Troubles we all have, some brought on us by others, some by ourselves; all have the same origin, the same remedy. Faith and prayer can remove them all.'

She only shook her head, which sank still lower.

'The experience of my grey hairs were worth very little,' he went on, 'if it could not find out untold what few find courage to tell. I have not waited for your confidence, my dear, to become your friend; I have not known you all this time without longing to do you good.'

She pressed his hand gratefully; her proud spirit seemed fast giving way.

'I cannot tell what your secret burden is,' said he, 'but I know One who can—and who will carry it for you. Why then will you toil up the hill Difficulty with it on your shoulders, when a look will roll it off? It will break your heart at last.'

'It will,' she said, without looking up.

'And yet you will not try the only means of deliverance? You will not believe when He says to you, "Ask, and you shall receive?"'

'Do *you* believe that—literally?'

'I do.'

'You believe that a trouble will be removed—a desire granted—for asking?'

'I believe and am sure, my dear friend, that no one ever asked rightly in vain. Either your desire is given, or it is made up to you in other ways.'

'Dr. Home, I *know* it is not so. I have asked—*He* knows how often? but the answer has never come—never!'

'Will you try once more? Will you promise me not to sleep to-night till you *have* tried it?'

'Will *you* promise *me*,' she returned, in a broken voice, 'that I shall be heard?'

'Yes,' said he, simply and solemnly. 'How or when, I cannot say, but leave it to Him to settle that, and in his own good time and manner—yes! Ah, my dear friend, life would look very different to you now if you had tried this a little sooner.'

'Oh, if I could but think so!' she said with a weary sigh; 'if I could but hope for that one thing, I could bear all the rest; the feelings get dulled, the shoulders accustom themselves to the yoke, the heart learns to beat alone—but never, never can any one tell who has not felt——'

She stopped short, with a sudden change of countenance. The rector looked round for the cause, and found Penelope at his elbow,

wearing a somewhat affronted expression of solicitude and inquiry. Was Adelaide any better? The spirits of the party had been so seriously damped by her unfortunate indisposition. *Did she think* she felt equal to just a little exertion for once; and would it hurt her to return for an hour or two? Oh, no, Adelaide answered, and if it did, it was of little consequence; and she had risen to obey the summons, when Dr. Home interfered, declared she was only fit for her bed, and recommended Miss Lyndon to despatch her thither forthwith. Her looks told their own tale too plainly even for Miss Lyndon to contradict; it was very unlucky, she must say; but people couldn't help being ill, she supposed: Adelaide certainly ought to be in bed; *she* would see that Walter's candle was out; his mother need not wait for that. Nobody wished her to over-exert herself, she was sure. And back she went to her guests. Dr. Home was following, thinking enough had been said for his patient to bear at a time; when, looking back, he was struck with the expression of her face, which a few moments before had breathed nothing but gentleness and sorrow. With a quick stride across the hall he was close to her again, and walked by her side to the foot of the stairs; then as she stopped to thank him for his sympathy and advice, and wish him good night, detained her by the hand, and fixed his honest, sensible eyes full on hers.

'Yes, I have shown you a promise; now I must give you a warning. You are a clever woman, my dear, and a well-read woman, and can understand the meaning of words, which all women cannot, though they are brisk enough in using them. Just turn over in your mind, until you have mastered it thoroughly, the full meaning of this text, "*God resisteth the proud.*" It may help to explain what has perplexed many before you. Good night.'

He wrung her white fingers till he left them as glowing as her cheek and brow had become at his words, and followed his hostess to the drawing-room.

But long after the party had broken up, and everybody was asleep in bed, any eye that had looked towards her window, from the moor, as Randolph did on the first night of his arrival, would have seen the steady lamp burning on, and known how little rest there was for that troubled spirit. Hours passed unheeded away, and still Adelaide Lyndon bent over her writing-desk, or sat with her face buried in her hands; every now and then starting in an agony of restlessness to walk up and down the room; and then, recalled by the dread of waking those beneath, sinking down by her bedside in a still deeper agony of prayer.

Sorrow she knew, and bereavement she knew; danger she had braved; trials of temper were her daily grievance; but never till

this night had she known what it was to feel degraded in her own eyes. The unlooked-for appearance of Maurice Randolph, returning after the lapse of years, himself changed in look, in manner, in position, to tell her she too was changed, and fallen from that high estate in which he had delighted to honour her, had struck such a blow at the dignity in which she had so often found refuge, as made it totter to its base. For it was not that he left her prosperous, and found her poor—left her in the opening joyaunce of youth, and found her widowed and desolate; *this* was not the change she would ever have blushed to own, or he have commented on so bitterly. The friend who remembered what her past had been could alone understand the position of her present; and looked upon her, not as the bereaved widow, dependent on the protection of her husband's family, but as the rebellious and unforgiven daughter, an alien and an outcast from her own!

‘God resisteth the proud.’ The words rang in her heart as if a messenger of judgment had spoken them. Was it *this* then that had kept the gate of heaven's blessing so heavily closed, that knock long and loud as she might, no answer had come from within? After all she had borne, all she had done, all she had tried so earnestly to do, all she had suffered so unjustly without redress, was this all the comfort that could be offered her? Cruelly deceived, falsely accused, with no justification allowed—no reasoning listened to—spurned as if despicable; rejected even when entreating reconciliation; till the sense of wrong had become as deeply rooted as the remorse, and made an additional weight in the burden she had to bear; was it all because an adversary stood in the way against her—the God that resisteth the proud?

It seemed a terrible thing to admit, yet she could not shut it out. Conscience, roused from sleep as by a trumpet blast, sprang up armed, and would not be at rest, till the enemy within the walls was driven out. The pride that she had unconsciously cherished all her life, the stamp, the heritage of her Norman blood, behind which she had shielded herself from vulgar contact, from obnoxious claims of duty, from ill-natured sarcasm, and idle remark—suddenly appeared before her, like its author in the garden of Paradise, in its own dark and repulsive form. If God resisted her, had she not all her life been resisting Him? always saying, ‘Not thy will, but *mine* be done?’ and when reaping what she had sown, and finding the harvest a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow, had she not deemed hardly of Him, that she had asked for bread, and He had given her a stone?

But could He, would He hear her now? Would He help her in her bitterness and desolation, and put away both her sorrow and her sin? Would He resist her still, when she laid her head in the



dust, and owned it was the due punishment of her rebellion? She had been promised that He would, and it seemed to her that night as if all power of resistance was gone from her spirit; as if there was no blame she was not ready to take, no humiliation she was not willing to endure, no condition she would not thankfully submit to, but to be at peace with all the world, and forgiven by her mother. A long, long gush of tears at that name choked her voice as she poured forth her prayer; but with them the load of cherished resentment, prejudice and pride, melted from her oppressed heart; and hope, so often crushed, revived again. Before she at length retired to rest, as soon as she was sufficiently calm to steady her hand and collect her thoughts, she wrote the two following letters: one to her brother, Lord Delaunay; the other, in which the first was enclosed, to her husband's kinsman and her own tried friend, Henry Lyndon.

‘CANNYMOOR MANORHOUSE.

‘1 o'clock, A.M.

‘MY DEAR BERTRAM,—I am afraid my handwriting can be no pleasant sight to you; I have done nothing to make it so, and gladly would I spare you the pain of these appeals, but you are the only friend who can help me where most I need help. Do you know what it is to have the heart sick with hope deferred—to dream every night you have accomplished your desire, and wake every morning with a blank that makes you loathe the blessed sun? If you do, you can understand why, in spite of all past discouragement, I venture to entreat you once more, if you ever loved me—and I know you did once—to try what can be done towards a reconciliation with my mother. I dare not trust myself to say what I feel on the subject of my long and relentless banishment from her favour: you know—or do you know?—how all my efforts to appease her anger have been rejected: forbidden to write to herself, I have tried in vain through Charlotte Conway to obtain a hearing. You may, perhaps, be more successful, if you will put yourself in my place for an hour, and realize it as far as you can. Is it just, is it right, to treat me as if I had disgraced you? May not my sorrows—they have been many more, dear Bertram, than you are aware of, or will ever know—may they not plead in my behalf to mitigate my sentence? Can your aversion follow the dead to his rest? *He* can never offend you again; his only offence he expiated in his early doom; and in the memory he has left behind, there is nothing that the proudest of our race need be ashamed to own. And his boy, Bertram—if I could but see him in your arms, and *hers*—could but be assured he would find friends in you, were I taken from him, what a load would be removed from my heart! No, I cannot despair; I will yet trust to your good-

ness of heart and sense of justice. Mr. Henry Lyndon will present this to you in person; he has my fullest confidence, and has invariably shown me the kindness and consideration of a real friend. Bertram, I throw myself on your love; we were children together; you have not forgotten all our young days; you will—I know you will—stand forward on my behalf, and save me from the gnawing sorrow that, but for God's mercy to those who need, must have worn down my spirit long ago !'

'MY DEAR HENRY,—I return you the papers, signed according to your directions. Whatever you think most advisable, I am ready to acquiesce in, having long ago been convinced that my affairs could not be in safer or kinder hands. Instead of apologizing for the encroachments I have already made on your goodness, I am about to test it again. I am always to give you trouble; but *you* know what *mine* is, and will not be surprised that, repulsed as I have hitherto been, I yet persist in another attempt. Enclosed is a letter to my brother. It has occurred to me that either he did not read my former ones, or that they wanted some one at hand to enforce these appeals, and persuade him to give my case more attention. Will you make the trial? Will you take this to him yourself, and speak for me? You who know all, can do so freely, without hazarding the respect to my Walter's memory. It is not a hard thing that I ask, though very hard to do without: I only entreat to be allowed to see my mother once more. I cannot bear this alienation from my own; and the longer I refrain and wait, in hopes of a token of relenting, the more humiliating becomes my position. Why I am so harshly dealt with, as obdurate, ungrateful and unworthy of notice, I cannot tell; never was a fault more sternly punished than mine. I do long to show Walter to his grandmother and uncle; how could they help loving such a dear little fellow? And I dare not talk of them to him, for fear of the questions he will put, and which I have not courage to answer. But I am taking up your valuable time; you would forgive me if you knew how unhappy I have been to-night; or what the unspeakable comfort is of having so kind a friend.'

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## CHAPTER VII.

Was kann der Brief enthalten ? Eitle Klagen,  
Mit denen man das mitleidsvolle Herz  
Der Königin verschonen soll.—*Schiller*.

HENRY Lyndon, the only member of her husband's family in whom Adelaide felt confidence, was nephew to the Squire of Cannymoor, and an industrious London lawyer. He had already more than once transacted business for her with her brother, therefore had little difficulty in making an early appointment on the same plea. Armed with the papers referred to in her letter, relating to some money left her by General Conway, to which Lord Delaunay was trustee—the lawyer made his appearance, punctual to the moment, at the door of the house in —— Street, which if not boasting either spaciousness or splendour, was well known as being one of the most elegant in the elegant world.

At one time, some years before the opening of our narrative, when the talents of her son and the beauty of her daughter filled the mind of Lady Delaunay with hopeful visions of eminence for the one and homage for the other, her house had been distinguished for the refined and intellectual quality of its entertainments, where all that was brilliant and most gifted were drawn together, and yet, where the presence of the small, quietly-dressed hostess, with the piercing eyes and charming address, was generally found to be the greatest attraction. In those days, the pleasant portals of the house in —— Street were ever open to the world, and one of its favourite refuges from *ennui* ; but change had swept over it since then. The dreams of its mistress had faded away, and with them her pleasure in society. Her daughter's marriage was one grievous disappointment ; her son's want of ambition was another. The Earl, after all the promise of his university career, had done nothing since to make himself a name, but expended his powers in learning a little of everything that could be learnt ; suffering parties and governments to go their own way, without caring whether it crossed his own or not, while he amused himself—such desultory studies could be termed nothing more—among scientific societies and literary institutes ; an amateur chemist one day, an astronomer another, a geologist a third, and the fourth a zealous antiquarian : collecting curiosities, haunting old libraries, bestowing equal earnestness on a specimen of a rare butterfly and an illuminated manuscript ; on the formation of a delta, and the cutting of an antique ring ; on the meaning and derivation of an obsolete word, and on the existence

of a central sun. To acquire superficial knowledge easily is a grievous let and hindrance towards acquiring it to any purpose ; and facility was the bane of Lord Delaunay's life. It was generally said that there was nothing he could not do, or that he could not be persuaded to leave undone. For ease and quiet, and liberty to enjoy his favourite pursuits without more trouble than suited the humour of the hour, he was satisfied to let everything else take its course ; and never committed an injury, save by omission or non-completion of good. His really generous qualities—and they were many—were, in fact, neutralized by this indolent instability ; and as well might his mother have built a tower on the bright green turf that marks the mountain bog, as have allowed her ambition to rear its hopes on the inviting promise of his youth. She was not long in making the discovery that Bertram was no more destined to be the leader of his country's councils, than Adelaide, the rebel and the alien, of its fashion and beauty ; and from that time she had gradually withdrawn from the world. Her health was said to be delicate, and though she continued to preside over her son's household, her society was confined to a few intimate friends.

So much the world knew, and Henry Lyndon among the rest ; and a little more, that the world did *not* know, but which rather added to than diminished the difficulties of the office allotted him. It was with anything but a sanguine expression of face he had first received Adelaide's request ; and that expression had time to deepen while he stood in Lord Delaunay's study, bearing his unpunctuality as best he might.

There were many things in this room to beguile impatience ; in itself it was no very distorted reflection of the owner's mind. The bookshelves were crammed with scientific works of every size and description, Continental as well as British ; reports of societies, maps, diagrams, engravings, loaded the tables and protruded themselves from cabinet doors ; here stood a case of minerals, there of shells ; specimens of old pottery, of the last-discovered metal, side by side with a Cellini cup, and a South-sea calabash ; a black letter, oaken-bound volume, of fabulous value from its rarity, half buried by a pile of the *Zoist* and such airy periodicals ; in good sooth, a strange medley, as the lawyer could not but observe, with the half-pitying, half-admiring shrewdness of the practical man. But being himself more a lover of art than of science, his attention was most powerfully absorbed by two portraits hanging opposite to each other, both admirably executed by the same master. One was a handsome man in the full vigour of life ; the other a child of four or five. The resemblance between them was striking ; especially in the large dark eyes, with their peculiarly shaped and fringed

lids. The child's attitude was beautifully careless ; one arm thrown round the neck of a brown setter, in whose silky coat the other little hand was sticking the flowers with which her lap was filled : a bright vision of graceful happiness, on which the eyes of the other picture seemed to rest with a lingering, half-melancholy tenderness, as though prescient of the sorrows laid up in store. That beloved and joyous child—what had been her destiny ?—who cherished her remembrance now in her once happy home ?

'Ah, poor woman,' thought the lawyer, with an involuntary shrug, 'I doubt there being many flowers in her lap now : at least, I should be uncommonly sorry to have mine depend on Cannymoor cultivation. Well, she cannot say I did not warn her ; the very reason, I suppose, why she honours me with this office to-day, which I by no means covet. It is a patchwork affair at best, when family grievances have to be made up through a third party. Ay, that is a likeness of her father, no doubt : young Walter has quite the hereditary eye, if that will do him any good. If he had been alive now,' he went on, half aloud, as he stood with folded arms, looking up at the late Earl's picture, 'it would have made all the difference ; but brothers are made of sterner stuff, and the most capacious memory can contrive to forget what it is inconvenient to remember.'

'Soliloquizing, Mr. Lyndon ?'

Henry turned, rather caught. Lord Delaunay had come in unobserved, and heard his last sentence. He bowed, with some apologetic remark on the force of habit.

'Nay,' said the Earl, good-humouredly, though with the hurried, hesitating manner peculiar to him, 'it is I who have to apologize for keeping you waiting ; and if your observation on short memories applied to me, I can only plead not guilty *intentionally*. I have been sitting for the last two hours between two philosophers, fighting for their several theories on the formation of the world, I believe : I have had as hard work to keep the peace between them as ever le Bourgeois Gentilhomme had between his masters ; and as they could not agree at last, each is to write an essay of nobody knows how many pages, and I am to read both. 'They who in quarrels interpose,' saith the poet—et cetera. I pleaded an appointment at last, and left them still at it, hammer and tongs. I must own I was glad to find I was well out of the fray.'

Henry Lyndon cordially agreed with him that it was no agreeable task to mediate between contending parties ; the rather that the chances were generally against your being thanked for your interference—if you were forgiven.

Lord Delaunay winced at this, and changed the subject hastily.

You were admiring my father's portrait, Mr. Lyndon ? It was

very like—considered one of X——’s best—a speaking likeness, people call it, which always makes me long, like poor Cowper, “O that those lips *had* language!”’ He came close to Henry’s side, and stood looking up at the picture for a few moments in silence.

‘After all, Mr. Lyndon,’ he resumed, with a sigh, ‘with all our discoveries and improvements, we have found nothing yet more valuable than the art which keeps lost friends, the best we ever had, fresh in the memory as when they stood living before us—as if for affection there were no such realities as change and death! Is it not a fine face, sir? look at the goodness expressed in the mouth.’

‘It is so, indeed,’ said Henry Lyndon, ‘and the look it seems to be fastening on the portrait opposite, makes me disposed to echo your lordship’s own wish.’

‘What is that, sir.’

‘“Oh that those lips *had* language!”’

‘Well, sir, and if they had—’

‘Why then, my lord, my presence here would be unnecessary. As I know your lordship’s time is valuable, perhaps you will allow me to enter on my business at once. I have some papers to submit to you, requiring your signature, but they need not detain you long.’

This was music to the Earl, who detested business, and escaped from it whenever he could. The words and tone of the lawyer, moreover, gave him a nervous apprehension that there was something more to come, and he was eager to get it all over, and escape. He glanced hurriedly over the papers laid before him—signed his name wherever required, and repeated several times, ‘All very correct—all quite right—whatever you think best, Mr. Lyndon; I am sure I am only too glad to think that she—that my sister has so good a friend, so kind an adviser.’

‘Lady Adelaide has honoured me with so much of her friendship,’ said Henry, ‘that she has a right to expect mine should not fail her in return: and as a proof of it, has requested me to give you this, and wait for your answer,’ producing the letter, from which Lord Delaunay recoiled in dismay.

‘My dear sir—my dear sir, it really is of no use—none whatever! I know all she would say; I have tried—everything has been tried, and to no purpose. These letters only add fuel to fire, and destroy every hope of its dying out of itself. It is no fault of mine, but ladies are so impetuous in their language, and so bitter in their recriminations, I had almost vowed, as my mother did, never to look at another on this subject. You must know yourself it can do no good.’

But Henry knew nothing of the kind, and still held the letter

towards him so decidedly, he was obliged to take it; eyeing it as it lay in his hand with marked distaste and apprehension.

‘I suppose you know what it contains, Mr. Lyndon. All the old subject, of course!’

‘It is an old subject now, my lord: old enough, I could submit, to be buried and forgotten.’

‘Well, my dear sir, and do not you suppose I have tried to do so before now? I am sure no one hates this uncomfortable state of things as I do, and it really is not fair to be appealing to me, as if I were the most hard-hearted, tyrannical brother in the world, and she the most injured woman. It is not using me well, and I have half a mind not to open the letter at all.’

He glanced at Henry Lyndon, in expectation of some remonstrance; but Henry had taken up one of the papers just signed, and was to all appearance absorbed in its contents. After taking two or three impatient turns about the room, the Earl presently stopped near the window, paused irresolutely for some minutes, and then, as the lawyer expected, reluctantly tore open the envelope.

‘What is the good of this?’ sighed he, wearily, as he did so; ‘I am very sorry for her, very—I would do anything for her that I could; if she wanted money, she should have it; but as she never asks for it, I suppose all is right in that quarter. I have no notion, for my part, of keeping up resentments so long; but when words beget words, and arguing and recrimination go on, letter after letter, there is no help for it. I can assure you, Mr. Lyndon, whatever might be the original dissatisfaction and disappointment, neither my mother nor myself have anything but great respect for your family; if it were only that, all this might have been settled long ago; but ladies’ letters!—they make more enemies in one word than can be got rid of in a hundred.’

He gave another sigh, and opened his own.

There was nothing to provoke him there. Very soon Henry observed his hand drawn across his eyes, then that he turned back from the end to reperuse the commencement; and when it was finished, he laid it down, with a very regretful shake of the head.

‘Poor girl, poor girl! it is hard for her, uncommonly hard! I wish I could see how it can be remedied. She seems in wretched spirits, upon my word. I hope to goodness they treat her well, down there. Ahem! what sort of place is—what’s-its-name—Cannymoor, Mr. Lyndon? Does it affect her health?’

Henry had never heard that it did. If Lady Adelaide wrote in depressed spirits, he submitted it might easily be accounted for on other grounds. This Lord Delaunay could not deny, and the more he pondered over the letter, the warmer grew his expressions of sympathy. Henry saw his advantage, and pursued it.

'Anxious as my uncle and his family may be to make her happy, it is impossible they can compensate her for so many bereavements. At her age, to have lost a husband and child, and, for that husband's sake, to be cut off from her nearest and dearest relations, is a heavy burden to bear, and one under which a feebler spirit must have sunk. Admit, my Lord, it is rather a severe method of dealing with such an offender; and when she humbles herself before you to ask forgiveness——'

'But that is the thing! that is just what she will not do, and never has done!' cried Lord Delaunay, drawing a chair close to that of the lawyer. 'To you, as her legal adviser, as well as her husband's relation, and as a man of the world, who can enter into the difficulties of these cases, I may speak freely; the marriage itself would have been forgiven long ago, I am sure. Your relation was a gallant young man, who died in the discharge of his duty, and whatever my mother's private feelings were at first, she would in time have mastered them; for all our sakes, everybody would have promoted a reconciliation. If Adelaide would, as you say, really humble herself, and ask her forgiveness submissively, there would be a chance—but she does not seem to have an idea how deeply her mother is offended. She craves reconciliation, and pleads that she has suffered enough, and so she has, poor girl, no doubt; but that is not the style of petition I would venture to show. How they managed it, I don't know, nor who set them on; but there did pass, after her marriage, one or two such letters between them; so bitter, so argumentative, as clever women's letters very often are, that Lady Delaunay solemnly declared, until the humblest submission was made to her, she would never look at another. Now my mother, Mr. Lyndon, seldom forms a determination hastily; but once formed, there is no turning her; you might as well think of moving the Great Pyramid. It is a family failing among us to carry firmness to excess; we are all alike in that respect, I am afraid.'

'If I remember rightly, your lordship was not with Lady Delaunay at the time of the marriage?'

'No, I was abroad, unluckily. I meant to have come home in time to see Adelaide before she sailed, but one thing and another hindered me, and I was too late. But I heard all the particulars from my cousin, Miss Conway, my sister's most intimate friend and companion, who knew the whole affair from first to last, and she has told me how imperious, almost insolent, was the tone in which Adelaide wrote. My cousin has always stood her friend, but even she could not justify such behaviour.'

'Ah!' said Henry Lyndon, dubiously. This was throwing quite a new light on the affair, and he began to see his way more dis-



tinctly. The Earl went on repeating, 'What can I do? Does she want money, do you suppose? Shall I send her a cheque? Or, suppose I were to run down and see her?'

Henry caught at the suggestion, and strongly advised him to carry it out. A word from him would have more effect on Lady Adelaide than twenty from any one else, and he would probably induce her to make the required submission, which she might not be aware was so absolutely necessary. There was his little nephew, too, as fine a little fellow as ever was seen, only likely to be rather a perilous charge to a mother to bring up; as his passion at present was for chemistry and experiments, and half the village was in terror from the results of his first attempts in natural philosophy. The uncle's face brightened, and he rubbed his hands with marked satisfaction. Such a lad ought to be encouraged, and he should be. He would go and see them forthwith, before he went abroad, as he must indispensably do in a few days, to attend a meeting of *savans*; he must see that boy, and show him a thing or two that he would not find in his popular science; and he was conning his sister's letter again, to help him to decide, when the door opened, and a lady came in, fashionably and elegantly dressed, so as in some measure to conceal the traces of time on her person, which in early youth had evidently been attractive.

Lord Delaunay instinctively dropped the letter on the table, and Henry Lyndon as promptly covered it with the other papers. This was done in a second of time, and before he could ask himself why he did it.

'You are engaged, my dear Delaunay; shall I disturb you?' asked the lady, advancing to the table, over which her quick eyes swept in an instant, resting first on the papers and then on the lawyer, who had risen to bow. 'I came to look for that pamphlet you recommended me last night, I hope I do not interrupt——'

'Not at all, not at all, my dear Charlotte,' said the Earl, trying, though in vain, to appear quite at ease; 'allow me to introduce Mr. Henry Lyndon to you—Miss Conway. A little private business, Charlotte; we shall have done in a few minutes; pray sit down, Mr. Lyndon. As you say, that investment will be much the safest; I leave it all to you. I shall be at your service for the Museum in ten minutes, Charlotte.'

'Pray do not hurry yourself,' said the lady, quietly taking up the torn envelope from the floor where Lord Delaunay had thrown it, and looking at the handwriting. 'I did not observe that you had heard from your sister this morning, Delaunay.'

'I had not then, but Mr. Lyndon brought me a note, just a few lines——'

‘How singular that she could not write by the post! So like her, to put manœuvre into the smallest trifles! May I see her note?’

‘Certainly—that is—I don’t know where I laid it just this minute.’

‘Oh! if it is one of her secrets, pray don’t trouble yourself.’

‘Secrets! nonsense!’ said he, hastily; ‘it is only what you know already, poor girl! I should *like* you to read it, and help me with your advice. Mr. Lyndon, is it among those papers anywhere?’

‘Most likely, my lord,’ said Henry, drily.

The Earl, blushing beneath his cousin’s eye, bustled among the papers, and found poor Adelaide’s appeal at the bottom. Miss Conway, after one sarcastic glance at the unmoved lawyer, read it attentively, and then deliberately tore it into small pieces, and threw it into the waste basket.

‘Those things are better destroyed, Delaunay. Well, what are you going to do? Are you to have a touching Sebastian and Viola scene, or do you mean to go, like the good Vicar of Wakefield, and bring the prodigal home behind you on a pillion?’

‘Nonsense, my dear Charlotte, I only thought——’

‘Do you mean to go up to your mother, and say you think she has behaved like a tyrant, and you insist on her receiving her daughter with proper respect and apologies? for that seems to me the drift of all these entreaties. Or would it be more dignified to call a meeting of your two houses, and in solemn state fraternize then and there? A true philosopher like you, Delaunay, considers all men equal, from the Chancellor to the shoeblack.’

‘Charlotte, Charlotte, your vivacity carries you away; you do not think before you speak,’ interrupted the Earl, visibly disconcerted; ‘Mr. Lyndon does not know you as well as I do, and he will suppose you intend to affront him.’

Henry Lyndon bowed with perfect composure; he rather thought he understood the lady better than her cousin did, but he did not think it necessary to say so. He observed it was out of the question for him to imagine an affront to be intended from a lady whose sense of justice would remind her that in no instance had his family intruded themselves on hers.

‘Very true, very true,’ said Lord Delaunay, eagerly; ‘*we* are the obliged parties, on the contrary. I feel it, I assure you. It comes to this, Charlotte, joking apart, I *must* run down and see that poor girl and her little one. You should hear what Mr. Lyndon says of him, the young rogue, with his experiments. Just like myself at his age, when I used to fag his mother to help me to make fireworks. I should like to have the training of that boy.’

'I have no doubt there is nothing his friends would like better, my dear Delaunay, and that you should adopt him altogether as your heir. It is only a pity he cannot have the title. Shall you bring him back with you *if* you go?'

'*If* I go? why do you lay such a stress on the contingency? What is to hinder me?'

'Nothing whatever, Delaunay; you will do as you please, of course. It shall never be said it was *I* who threw difficulties in your way; but seriously, in your mother's state of health at present, I should be careful how I did anything to agitate her. You know how trying the subject is; she is always ill after it, and I do not think her at all strong just now.'

'You are always thoughtful and attentive—you always have been, my dear Charlotte; but in this case——'

'And supposing you went, what good could you do? Just revive old grievances, and open old wounds; hear us abused, and be at a loss what to answer. I know your easy good-nature! And then what chance would there ever be of a reconciliation? No, no; if you ask my advice, that would be the last thing you ought to do. You see, Mr. Lyndon,' turning to that gentleman with more politeness than she had hitherto shown, 'if it rested with Lord Delaunay and myself, nothing would be easier; but the case stands thus—Lady Adelaide has mortally offended her mother; and every time she has written—and this pathetic style of appeal is very easy to her, she has a fluent pen, and knows how to paint a position strikingly to give it effect—it has always resulted in a wider estrangement. I cannot take the responsibility of disturbing the peace of one who is a second mother to me, unavailingly. If Adelaide had been guided by me!—but she was always the same; a strange mixture of pride and artifice; apparent daring with the subtlest talent for intrigue and finesse. It would be madness for you to be drawn into this, Delaunay.'

'Well, then, I will just write her a friendly line, to tell her we *wish* we could do something, eh?'

'If you ask my advice, I should say *you* had better not write. Do not you see it implies you blame your dear mother's conduct in the whole affair? and how keenly she would resent *your* being on loving terms with your sister while she is under her censure! Depend upon it, the only way is to go on quietly, as we are doing, and trust to time to bring about a better state of things. If you like, *I* will write; it will not so much signify if your mother blames *me*—I will take the risk on myself for Adelaide's sake.'

'Thank you, Charlotte; if you think it is best, suppose you do. She will be disappointed, I am afraid,' added he, with a sigh and a

shrug, half resigned, half impatient; 'but I cannot help it—I wish I could.'

'So do we all, most sincerely,' said Miss Conway; and she sat down at once, and wrote to her cousin:—

'MY DEAR ADELAIDE,—Your brother received your letter this morning by the hands of Mr. Henry Lyndon, and has deputed me to answer it, as his feelings will not allow him to make the attempt. It is very painful to us both to appear indifferent to your unfortunate position, which every year must render more irksome; but you may be assured if it were in his power or mine to do anything to alter it, nothing would give us more pleasure. The delicate state of your mother's health, at present, renders it impossible to disturb her by a renewal of the subject she has forbidden—the rather that we are quite sure it would be unavailing, except on such terms as you have always declared nothing would justify your submitting to. On that head you must be the best judge; perhaps the want of the comforts and enjoyments of your station, which you threw too hastily away, may have changed your mind. I can readily imagine how earnestly you must desire to regain your former footing in society; and you are old enough now not to be insensible to such considerations as you once despised. I can truly say, I wish you may eventually succeed, but it would be a breach of friendship to hold out any false hopes. It is gratifying to us to know that you are in a good home, with every comfort about you that your station admits. Your brother desires his love, and, at the same time, hopes you will refrain from these complaints in future, as they are distressing to him and useless to you.

'Believe me, dear Adelaide,

'Affectionately yours,

'CHARLOTTE CONWAY.'

Lord Delaunay glanced over his cousin's shoulder as she wrote, and again shrugged his shoulders, but made no comment.

'There, Bertram,' she said, as she sealed the envelope; 'nothing can be kinder than that, I am sure. I suppose we must trouble Mr. Lyndon to forward it, as Adelaide seems to wish it should all pass through his hands.'

'I am sure I am deeply obliged to Mr. Lyndon—deeply,' said the Earl, avoiding Henry's eye, who, as he took the letter, bowed, regretting, in pointed tones, that he had been able to do *so little* to deserve thanks; and so withdrew, hearing Miss Conway, as he closed the door, tell her cousin, now that tiresome affair was settled, she would be charmed to go with him to the Museum.

'Go!' thought Henry Lyndon, rather viciously, as he walked

away, setting his teeth hard ; ' go, spiteful, mischief-making woman—and see if there is a mummy, a skeleton, a fossil reptile there more utterly devoid of human kindness than yourself ! I think I would give a year of my life, valuable as it is, to see my friend T—— handle you in the witness-box for half an hour. I will be even with you yet before I have done with you, even though that pleasure be denied me ; for it is plain enough now while that influence is at work, we shall make nothing of that slippery brother. A good two hours I have frittered away upon them, and all to no purpose.'

His discontent was carrying him along with such hasty strides, he did not discover he was pursued till, at the turn into another street, he suddenly found an arm passed in his. It was Lord Delaunay, rather out of breath.

' What a pace you walk, Mr. Lyndon ! It was all I could do to catch you, and I have just one word more to say. There is a strong feeling, you may have observed, on this subject ; and I would rather avoid discussions, if possible, and perhaps it is as well I should not actually interfere. But you can tell my sister from me, that if she will, through you, send me by return of post a letter of complete, unreserved submission to her mother (deferring all justification or defence to another opportunity), simply asking to be forgiven—I will undertake to show it to her, and do my best to plead her cause ; and if my mother consents to an interview, I will go down to Canny-moor and fetch her. I can say no more than that.'

' Certainly not, and your sister will feel it deeply,' said Henry, cordially.

' But understand this, Mr. Lyndon, and make her do so. I must go abroad next week, so unless her decision is immediate, it will be too late. I do not wish for any argument or discussion. If she cannot conscientiously write as I propose, her silence will be answer enough, and all will remain as it is at present, with this understanding, that she appeals to me no more. I put it into her own hands to accept or reject—once rejected, I can have nothing more to do with it. But she will be too glad, do not you think so ? She seems very much in earnest.'

' I cannot imagine that she will hesitate,' said Henry Lyndon ; ' and no representation on my part shall be wanting. Her dignity will assuredly be safe in the hands of her mother and brother ; no concession will be required of her which it would be beneath them to accept ; and having offended, she may surely ask forgiveness without lowering herself in their esteem or her own.'

' You have expressed it exactly, my dear sir ; I leave it to you. Depend upon it, it is our only chance, and I only wish it had been done sooner.'

With a cordial shake of the hand, the Earl then turned away, and walked back as hurriedly as he had come. Henry Lyndon, in high spirits, hastened to his chambers, and despatched Miss Conway's letter, enclosed in one from himself, delivering his message, and urging, in the strongest language, the expediency of an immediate and satisfactory reply. He expected it by return of post, but day after day passed away, and no answer came.

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### CHAPTER VIII.

Despised—neglected—left alone to die!—*Crabbe*.

MR. RANDOLPH wanted a horse, and as that part of England was noted for a particularly fine breed, whether his stay was to be long or brief, it was always money well laid out, as Mr. Spindler told him. So warmly did he second the scheme, that he offered to drive him over to the horse-fair at Shareham, and to put him in the way of making a good bargain. The offer being accepted, they started together; but Mr. Spindler being no great amateur in horse-flesh himself, introduced Randolph to one or two friends who were, and left him in their hands; while he executed his own business, and divers household commissions for Miss Chatterley. When he rejoined his friend at the livery-stable where they had appointed to meet, he found that instead of making a good bargain, and securing 'a good, steady, quiet hack,' the traveller had given a decidedly high price to a gipsy, for a horse whose general aspect was far from encouraging to timid nerves. The glare of the eye, the opening nostril, the restless pawing of the fore foot, with some suspicious motion of the hinder legs, all told of difficulties to the rider, past, present, and to come. Mr. Randolph, however, seemed full of complacency and satisfaction, and was giving the most cheerful directions to the ostler about sending his new acquisition to Cannymoor—when Mr. Spindler ventured to remonstrate. Did he know what he was doing, buying a horse of one of those vagabonds who cheated everybody they came near—to say nothing of carrying fevers wherever they went? He would not have dealings with one of 'em, not if they offered him their stolen cattle for a quarter their value, and he hoped Mr. Randolph would think better of it. He would be sure to repent his bargain sooner or later. Randolph laughed, and looked at the gipsy, a tall, sinewy specimen of his race, who was lingering near the horse, as if loth to lose sight of it. He might have thought as Mr. Spindler did, he said, if he were not sure, let who would cheat him, it would not be one of *that* tribe: and he held out his hand to the fellow, who took it with evident pride and satisfaction, and presently pulled his customer aside to give him some very earnest advice.

'There, Mr. Spindler,' said Randolph, as they drove away, 'so far from taking me in, the fellow has been telling me exactly how to treat the animal, and to manage him when restive, as he is apt to be. The fact is, I believe, you are pretty correct in your general estimation of their honesty; but if you do make a friend among them, he is stanch enough. I had an opportunity of doing good service to some of that tribe once, and saw a good deal of them, and have more than once received proofs of their warm feelings towards me. There are rogues enough among them, but a few have been reformed, and turned out well: only a few, I am sorry to say.'

'No, that I can answer for; and I should be apt to doubt the reformation even of those few. I have no faith in conversions, I can't say I have; and if there is one thing on earth I have less patience with than another, it's your idle, beggarly tramps, that should all go to the tread-mill or the hulks, if I had my way. It's your fine charities that make the beggars, and I make it a matter of conscience not to belong to any of 'em. There's a deal too much of that sort of thing in Cannymoor, and Dr. Home is at the bottom of it all: never easy without his hand in your pocket: I hate that sort of officiousness. However, as to gipsies, we have all of us a horror of them—they brought us a fever once, and not a soul will tolerate the sight of them now; the people declare they brought the potato rot one year, and a bad crop another: for you see, though we won't harbour them in the village, there are plenty of wild corners about here where they encamp, especially in fair time. Oh, stop; I nearly forgot to ask if there are any letters.'

He pulled up at the post-office, and after receiving a couple for himself, inquired if there were any for the Manorhouse; and the clerk, who seemed quite accustomed to the sort of thing, handed them over without hesitation.

'One of our inconveniences,' explained Mr. Spindler, as they drove on, 'is having no Cannymoor post-office, and depending for the delivery of our letters on a lazy old vagabond, not worth his salt, who crawls backwards and forwards twice a day with the bag! I have grumbled till I am tired, but he is a sort of pet of the good ladies, and they say his bread depends upon it—just as if public convenience was not to be considered first. They won't heed me, so sooner than wait till five in the evening, I sometimes fetch my own letters, and Mr. Lyndon's too, and very glad he is to get them—sometimes. Ay, there's one I see, he won't like quite so well. Just take the reins a bit, will you, Mr. Randolph? My right arm feels a twinge that shows me we shall have rain to-night.'

While Randolph drove, which he did at a pace that rather astounded the old horse, Mr. Spindler put on his spectacles, and

conned the outside of his friend's correspondence. His own, he doubtless remembered, would keep.

'A call on those shares of his, I know: he wouldn't take my advice—never will. Ah, and a letter from Baynes and Pultham, I'll bet a pound. I know the look of their documents pretty well. I have heard things of that house that I don't much like. They don't carry on half the business they did when Lyndon was at the head of it. He might have doubled his capital by this time if he had kept the management in his own hands, instead of being a sleeping partner, and sinking so much money in that house and grounds, just out of family pride. The real landowner ought to hold the whole of the property, there's no doubt about it; but wilful men will have their own way. I wish he may never repent it—but if Baynes and Pultham *were* to shake—and stranger things have happened—we may live to see how much better Master Walter is for all the fuss made about his inheritance.'

'Would it ruin Mr. Lyndon, then?'

'Ruin! not quite that. It might be the best thing for him in the end; but there would be a fine down-come of all our pride and consequence! Ah, here's a letter for her ladyship. Hers are few and far between. London, eh?—that will be some business too, I'll warrant. Not that hers can be very extensive. Whatever her fortune was, there's not much of it left. Between ourselves, the poor young captain was as wild as a hawk, and it's my belief he was over head and ears in debt when he married, and her money went to clear him: but that's neither here nor there. I know a party who knew them both in India; and for all our good friends at the Manorhouse may say, it was pretty well known out there that his wife was head, wits, memory, everything to him, or he never would have held his ground for a minute. He was brave enough, poor fellow! but with no sense in money matters—not an ounce; and proud and high as she carries herself, she was often, to my certain knowledge, pinched enough in her own expenses to meet his. But I don't mention this at the Manorhouse, nor to anybody, indeed: we all swear by Walter's memory, you know. I did hint once to Lady Adelaide what I had heard, and she gave me such a look for my pains, thinks I, least said soonest mended, and I never touched on the subject again. Hulloo! which way are you going?'

'Is not this the nearest?'

'Ay, but not where I mean to take you. Turn to the right; I want you to see where the new line was to have been cut, and will be some day, I hope, when people come to their senses. Only don't rattle along at such a rate; for the road is full of ups and downs, and you shake me to death.'



It had not escaped the notice of the family, though no one could divine the cause, that since the evening of her fainting fit, a change had passed over Adelaide's demeanour. She was either in a state of feverish restlessness, for which constant and fatiguing exertion seemed the only relief—or when this passed off, her spirits appeared subdued to a degree that quite fidgetted Miss Penelope. The repeated inquiries of the neighbours after her late indisposition were all received with such patient politeness—the family plans and arrangements were all so quietly acquiesced in—the little side thrusts put out by Miss Lyndon to try their effect, were taken so passively, that her sister began to think something serious must be the matter. Yet she could not be ill, when she was able to take walks that would kill anybody else; and it could not be bad news, for she had had no letters: whatever it was, it was very irritating; for there is no pleasure in hitting an antagonist who will not hit again, and the more anxious Penelope grew, the more acid waxed her temper. The morning had been spent by Adelaide partly over Walter's lessons, partly in his play-room, assisting him in his 'experiments;' then, while he was in the garden, she had taken her turn as usual, of sitting with Mrs. Lyndon in the drawing-room till it should be time for their daily walk. The restlessness being rather strong upon her at that moment—for it was the day when she had calculated that her letter might arrive—she was working it off as best she could, by plying her needle as vigorously on Walter's new shirts, as if her daily pittance depended on 'seam, and gusset, and band.' A slight variety was provided by the poor old lady's knitting getting into some difficulty or other every now and then, when it would be, 'My love, I am very tiresome to you, but somehow I don't seem to be very clever at this to-day;' and then Lady Adelaide laid down her own work, took up fallen stitches, and smoothed hopeless-looking tangles, and as soon as all was set straight, went on again as hard as ever.

'What notable fingers you have, my love! There you go—stitch, stitch; I can hardly count fast enough to keep up with you. I did not know young ladies were so notable now-a-days; I thought they liked French, and music, and—and that sort of thing, better.'

Lady Adelaide answered her cheerfully; boys grew so fast, their mothers had something else to do besides keeping up their accomplishments.

'Ah, my love, you may say so; his uniform and things kept me awake half the night, because I knew he wouldn't allow for growing; and you always should, you know. But he laughed when I told him so; everybody laughs at a poor silly old thing like me, don't they?'

Adelaide assured her to the contrary.

‘No, now I think of it, *you* don’t laugh, my love. You never laugh at all, do you? I never heard you. But then,’ after a pause, ‘I dare say when you and the girls get together—young people always like to be together—you have your little jokes all to yourselves, don’t you, my love?’

Adelaide was saved answering this by Penelope having entered in time to overhear it; her hands full of account books and her face of domestic care.

‘Whatever is the dear mother dreaming of, now? Jokes? yes, mamma, to be sure; fit to kill ourselves. You have no idea how merry we are, and as to Adelaide, she is the very life and soul of the party!’

‘Ah, yes, so she is; she always has something pretty to say to everybody, hasn’t she, Penny?’

‘I dare say, ma’am (*sotto voce*), if one could only get at it. “Where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise,” I am sure.’

Then as Adelaide took no notice, but kept her head bent over her work, Penelope turned to the writing-table, and sat vehemently down to her accounts.

‘It is all very well to talk of joking; but it is no joke keeping house, I know that—with my father raving at me half the morning about our expenses, and saying we cannot go on, and we *must* retrench, and he cannot afford having so many people, and all, till I am quite sick of it altogether.’

‘So many people?’ repeated Adelaide.

‘Yes, that is what he says. It is the truth, I am sure. We are a larger party than we used to be, and what with prices being higher, and one thing and another, we *are* spending more than we ought, I know that. I can’t help it; I wish I could.’

‘Neither can I, Penelope.’

‘Humph!—well, no matter. I suppose as you say so, you can’t. That’s soon settled. Don’t talk.’

Lady Adelaide did not want to talk, and took the rebuff so quietly, Miss Lyndon felt she could not bear it much longer.

‘It may sound very inhospitable, my dear,’ she resumed, while she mended her pen, ‘but I must say, considering all things, your own family might think of us a little, and do something for you and Walter. I do feel we are rather unfairly treated on the whole, and you must see it yourself.’

Lady Adelaide winced under this stroke; it was one against which she had no defence. She worked on without reply; not trusting herself to make any.

‘Whatever you can be stitching away at so desperately I cannot conceive,’ remarked Miss Penny, presently, after a refreshing survey of the month’s consumption of butcher’s meat. ‘You never mean to

say Walter wants more shirts ! It was only the other day he had new ones. Really you are bringing him up to an extravagance—I only hope his noble relations will condescend to do something for him, as this property will never be enough. It is high time they did, *I* think, and my father thinks so too ; and so, I should have supposed, would you.’

‘What do you wish me to do?’ asked Lady Adelaide, in a low voice that was almost humble.

‘Do ? Why, what anybody else with common sense would have done long ago. Write to your brother, Lord Delaunay, to make you a proper allowance.’

Lady Adelaide shook her head ; *that* she could never do.

‘Well, I cannot see why ! Here you do not care how much *we* do ; it never seems to offend your pride at all ; but you will not bring it down to claim what you certainly have a right to expect from those who can afford it so much better !’

‘Penelope, my pride, as you call it—and I suppose you give it the right name—has been brought down lower than you think ; though not so low as to ask for money where I am denied justice. Wait a little while longer ; I did not know my father grudged me and Walter a home ; but since he does, and since you tell me plainly that you do, depend upon it I will do my best to free you from the burden, if you only give me time.’

‘There ! now you are off in one of your high and mighty tempers ! Who ever grudged you a home, I should like to know ? You have no right to use so unkind an expression,’ said Penelope, on whose part more than half of all this had been merely word warfare, with little expectation or desire of its being attended to. ‘I shall take care my father hears of it, after all he has done, half ruining himself for Walter’s sake ! But it is just like you—just what Mr. Randolph said the other evening——’

‘What did Mr. Randolph say ?’

‘Oh, never mind ; I don’t remember the words exactly. Don’t talk ; I shall never have done if you keep interrupting me so.’

Lady Adelaide put up her work, and rose to leave the room.

‘Where are you going ?’

‘To take a walk with Walter. Have you any objection ?’

‘Yes, I was just going to tell you, my father does not wish Walter to go off the grounds to-day. He has heard there are gipsies about on account of the Shareham horse-fair, and he is afraid of his catching some fever or other. We don’t want doctor’s bills to add to our other expenses.’

The colour rose most rebelliously into Lady Adelaide’s face at this new vexation. She could bear anything better than an infringement on her boy’s pleasures, and for a moment seemed half inclined

to do battle for his rights and privileges. Instead of the expected remonstrance, however, she only gave a quick, restless sigh, and left the room ; murmuring a line that was often in her thoughts just then—

*Geduld! Geduld! wenn's Herz auch bricht!*

A few minutes after, Miss Lyndon saw her hurrying out alone.

'It is most extraordinary,' thought Penelope, now quite anxious and uneasy. 'I am sure something is the matter. It is quite unnatural to see her spirit down like that. I would rather by half she had shown some of her airs, and I did all I could to make her. I *must* speak to my father.'

Blest be the man who invented exercise! and blest the mind and body that can avail themselves of its aid! For the overworked brain, for the irritated temper, for depression of spirits, weariness of nerves, indolence, despondency, and such-like evils—what remedy can be named so simple that has so often been found, if not a cure, at least a relief?

Adelaide Lyndon felt its influence; it was the one in which, next to Dr. Home's experience, had given her most faith. Such walks as she and her boy accomplished, to whom every spot for miles round was known, and had long been marked in Cannymoor, where very few took long walks for pleasure, as proofs of her 'singularity;' but without convincing either of them that they ought to be given up. Walter's pride and pleasure in them was so great, his mother had been obliged to slip out privately; as, if he had seen her, there would infallibly have been a mutiny against the obnoxious decree. It was as great a punishment to her as to him. Deprived of the little companion, whose chatter and constant demands on her imagination or memory to tell him stories or explain difficulties, to say nothing of carrying all the treasures, animal, mineral, and vegetable, that it pleased him to collect—served so effectually to take her out of herself—she could only hope to tire down her excited nerves by pure exertion; and she set about this in her usual determined manner, by taking the most fatiguing road she knew, through the wildest, most broken part of the neighbourhood.

The air blew freshly, but not unpleasantly, in her face; there was a whisper of coming spring in its light breath, to which she could not be insensible. Hope will, must revive, when nature does; it is impossible to despond over the present or the future, when everything about us testifies to the watchful care of Heaven, and the boundless resources by which the earth renews her youth. Her spirits rose; she began to look forward, to reckon on the probability, next to certainty, of a speedy and favourable answer to her appeal;

of a happy result—too happy almost to be realized—the happiness of being in her mother's arms, and there finding sympathy for all past, and deliverance from all present troubles; sheltered from all the buffetings of a hard world; from the pressure of poverty and the irksomeness of ungenial companionship; from Penelope's temper and Maurice Randolph's scorn—that last, the overflowing drop of bitterness, which she felt she could not bear, and must not think of.

But with the quickened hope came again the impatience of suspense. Over and over again she calculated the chances that seemed to fix this day as the one when she would hear. Henry had, immediately on the receipt of hers, sent her a few lines, promising to do all he could; and she knew him to be prompt in action as he was clear in judgment; he would not lose a day that he could help—no, the answer *must* arrive that post; and goaded by the passionate longing, she went on without considering time and distance, till she suddenly discovered that she had taken the wrong turning, and come considerably out of her way. This recalled her to herself, and remembering the report of the gipsies being in the neighbourhood, she did not feel very desirous of falling in with one of their encampments, so far from any assistance. The spot to which she had come, an old deserted quarry, overrun with bushes and underwood, was well known as one of their favourite haunts. It was a lovely place in summer; a little spring, now swollen by the recent snow into the dignity of a stream, gushed from the rock, and poured down the bank, along the side of the steep lane; it was generally a treasury of wild flowers, and Walter had last year brought his mother there on a botanizing expedition, of which it may be observed that his share of the work consisted in gathering promiscuously all that took his fancy—and hers in selecting, carrying, and arranging them for him. Since the summer, Walter's zeal for botany having cooled, he had been eager to explore the quarry for geological specimens; it had several times been planned, but failed hitherto; and now his mother felt almost resentful at the tyranny that had kept him at home when he might have enjoyed his coveted pleasure. She changed her opinion, however, presently, when about half way up the lane she heard a sound to which she was never indifferent—the crying of a child. With some difficulty, active as she was, she climbed the rough bank, and made her way through the bushes and furze, till she found a little dirty figure, crouched under the shelter of a large stone, rubbing her eyes, and keeping up a dismal wail, as if things in general were going on in a decidedly unsatisfactory manner. It took a great deal of gentle coaxing to stop this, without scaring the little creature into a precipitate flight; but by dint of patience and soft words, Lady

Adelaide made out at last that she was hungry, very hungry, and Ally was cross, and wouldn't give her *nout*, and mammy lay a-bed, and wouldn't get up, and the others were all gone, and she was *so* hungry! Where was her mammy then? Oh, yon, in the tent. How long had she been in bed? Oh, she was in the cart yesterday, but they stopped last night and, mammy didn't get up when the rest did; so they all went to the fair, and left them and the donkey and Ally; and Ally had *give* her no dinner, and she was *so* hungry! 'Suppose you take me to your mammy then, and perhaps we could persuade Ally to give you some?' The child jumped up, readily enough, rubbed the remains of the tears off her dirty little cheeks, and led the way, half climbing, half tumbling, down the quarry—where the smouldering embers of a fire, with the camp kettle still suspended over it, and the presence of a lean donkey, with his legs hobbled, musing mournfully over an empty sack, confirmed the little one's story. It was evident that the gipsies had been there, and probably meant to return. Under the shelter of the hollow rock, a kind of shed had been hastily put up, of blankets and sacking stretched on poles; and beneath, on a heap of miscellaneous articles, covered with an old cloak and rug, lay a woman, who, it needed but a glance of Lady Adelaide's experienced eye to perceive, was so ill as to require immediate assistance.

It might have been about an hour later, that Mr. Spindler and his gig came slowly up the lane, followed at some distance on foot by Randolph, who finding it hopeless to get the old horse out of a walk on such a road, preferred a cigar and the revolving of sweet and bitter thoughts undisturbed, to the endless flow of his companion's conversation. Just as the latter arrived in front of the bank, down jumped the little tattered object described above, hailing him with a shrill voice, 'Please, good gentleman, stop!'

Mr. Spindler dexterously whisked his whip in the direction of the outstretched hand, and dropped a stinging application across the fingers. 'You little thieving vagrant, be off with you, or I'll have you in jail, I will, before you can say Jack Robinson. Off, I say!' And again the whip cracked; the child set up a howl, and vanished; Mr. Spindler moved on complacently, and was reflecting how easily all such nuisances and drains on one's pocket might be put down, if everybody had as much presence of mind as himself—when another voice, more urgent than the last, arrested his progress.

'Mr. Spindler! Mr. Spindler! for heaven's sake, stop!'

He did stop, amazed beyond expression. 'Good gracious, Lady Adelaide! where have you dropped from?'

'Mr. Spindler, thank God you are come. I was almost in de-

spair. 'Will you come and help me?' Her voice was quivering from fatigue and haste.

'Help you? of course, my lady, of course; it is not often you ask me, I'm sure. What is it I can do?'

'I have found a woman dangerously ill, who will die without help. Will you come and see what can be done—whether she cannot be removed to some shelter where she can have medical assistance? Pray make haste. Your horse will stand, will he not?'

Mr. Spindler drew horse and gig precipitately to one side. 'Stand? I dare say he would; but to tell you the plain truth, Lady Adelaide, I don't seem to care to try. A woman dangerously ill, forsooth! a tramp with an infectious fever, enough to poison the whole neighbourhood. I wonder your ladyship can be so insanely imprudent, I do indeed! and as to my going near a dirty thief of that kind——'

He jerked the horse's rein; Lady Adelaide ran down the bank to stop him. 'It is a case of life and death—you are not in earnest, Mr. Spindler? You will not leave me?'

'My dear lady, I am exceedingly sorry—shocked beyond expression (moving on in great alarm); but you really should not come near any one, fresh from the infection. The workhouse or the jail is the proper place for those vile tramps, and I am sure good Mr. Lyndon will agree with me. I dare say she belongs to a gang of them, and they will come back by and by and look after her, depend upon it, without our risking our lives.'

'And meanwhile she is sinking for want of proper care. For shame, Mr. Spindler! you are a man and a Christian (she could not bring herself to say a gentleman); you will not allow such cowardly reasons to stop you from an act of humanity that a savage would blush to refuse!'

'Now, really, my lady, really, you are so vehement—I'll just appeal to our good friend behind there, Mr. Randolph! Here he comes. Don't throw away your cigar, man, whatever you do! It may be the saving of our lives; give me one if you have it to spare—nothing like tobacco to keep off infection; my lady will excuse—thank ye!'

And stooping over the side of the gig, Mr. Spindler lighted the proffered cigar at that of his companion, who held it to him with one hand, while with the other he lifted his hat to Lady Adelaide, with the polite inquiry, if there was anything in which he could be of service.

Before she had recovered from the trouble into which his unexpected appearance had momentarily thrown her ideas, Mr. Spindler answered for her.

'It's just this, my dear sir [puff, puff], my lady has found some tramps with a horrid fever, and wants me—*me*, of all people in the world, to go and play nurse, surgeon, or apothecary [puff], I don't know which—thank ye. I am no great smoker, but medicinally, you know [puff]—I can do the thing at a push. Very good cigar, too, upon my word. Does your ladyship object to the smell in the open air? No? I am delighted.'

'Well, sir?' said Randolph, as if expecting to hear more.

'Well, sir, what would you have? I object, naturally—and then she calls me inhuman——'

'Naturally,' put in Randolph.

'What do you mean? I am proud to oblige her ladyship, as far as I can. If she will condescend to get into my gig, and let *you* drive her home, I don't mind walking, old as I am; and it is but burning the cushions, though maybe fumigating with sulphur might do. I don't care for anything in reason—but as to catching a fever for the sake of rascally thieves and vagabonds, it is what I don't seem to feel called upon to do. Charity begins at home, you should remember, my lady.'

'I should,' said Lady Adelaide; 'but I have had cause enough to forget it, heaven knows! You exaggerate the danger, sir—there is no fear of infection, as far as I can judge; the poor woman appears to me to have just shaken off some disorder that has left her in a deplorable state of weakness, increased by neglect, for which nursing and wholesome food may yet be in time to-day—to morrow it may be too late. You shrug your shoulders, Mr. Spindler; it is no affair of yours, you think. *You* do not know what sickness is in a strange land—and *I* do.'

'So do I,' said Randolph, heartily. 'So now let us come to an understanding, if you please. One of us, Mr. Spindler, must remain to assist Lady Adelaide, and the other go to find a lodging for this poor creature, whoever she may be. You do not seem inclined to remain—will you drive on to Cannymoor, if there is no nearer place, and see what you can do?'

'Humph—well, I don't mind so much about that. I suppose, Lady Adelaide, Mr. Lyndon will have no objection to a bed being made up in his barn?'

Lady Adelaide was obliged to confess, as he was resolved she should, her fear that Mr. Lyndon's dread of infection would not suffer him to permit it for an instant.

'We can readily excuse Mr. Lyndon's anxiety for his heir,' said Randolph, in a conciliatory tone; 'but without annoying him, is there nobody who will let a room for a week or so?'

'To Lady Adelaide, or to you, with pleasure, I am sure; but to a sick gipsy, no, thank you.'



'No farmer that will give one an outhouse, if he is paid for it ?'

'Not one of *my* tenants, nor anybody else's, I'll answer for it, that would feel justified in admitting any one with an infectious disorder within their premises ; and I shouldn't like to be the one to ask it.'

'Mr. Randolph,' said Lady Adelaide, turning to him for the first time, 'you see now what the charity of Cannymoor is. I think, however, I know one house where this poor woman would be received to oblige me, if we had any means of conveying her there.'

'As to that,' said Mr. Spindler, 'a horse and cart are always to be had for money, except at hay and harvest-time. There is Mullins has one, I know, if it is not engaged.'

'I met it going home full of faggots,' said Lady Adelaide.

'Then I can hire that for you, if you like ; but, as Mr. Randolph says, let us come to an understanding in a business-like way. Folks will not put themselves out of their way without being paid, you know, my lady, and times are hard, they tell me, when I ask for my rents. It is a thing *I* couldn't afford to have anything to do with myself ; but with your ladyship it may be different—you will be answerable for all the expense ?'

He saw her change countenance, and chuckled inwardly with intense glee. Randolph's purse was half drawn forth, but with a gesture he could not disobey, she arrested the movement, and the words that were on his lips. 'Mr. Spindler has a right to be cautious,' she said, with quiet dignity ; 'but I believe I can safely undertake thus much without hazarding his credit, or encroaching on your politeness, Mr. Randolph—farther than by asking you to give the poor creature the benefit of your medical skill, of which we have heard so much ?'

He bowed low, and was following her as she hastened away, when Mr. Spindler called him back to whisper—

'I say, I had her there, hadn't I ? Get her pride up, and she will do anything ; I know she has not a sixpence to spare, but now she has taken it on herself, she will do it, if she sells the gown off her back. I am safe from *that* risk, whatever I may be from the other.'

'I do not see how you can catch much infection with this keen breeze whistling about your ears,' said Randolph, impatiently, and with difficulty restraining his sensations of disgust. 'Wait here only a few minutes, and I will bring you word what to do.'

Maurice was prepared for a sad sight, but not for so piteous a one as he beheld when he came to the encampment ; a thin, wan face, with long, fair hair, tangled and matted, escaping from under

an old rag of a dirty yellow handkerchief, knotted under her chin, making the ghastly cheeks look ghastlier still—large, hollow grey eyes—lips parched and black, through which the faint breath came in painful gasps, as if each must be the last; an unclean, wretched, hopeless object, such as he had never approached on British soil, and at whose aspect he involuntarily recoiled. But the head had now found a pillow, and that pillow was the arm of a pitying woman, whose voice, as he came near, was soothing her terrors, and explaining that the gentleman was clever and kind, and coming only as a friend.

‘Is he a friend of yours?’ murmured the vagrant.

‘No,’ was the quiet reply, ‘he is not a friend of mine, but he is anxious to be a friend to you, and he will tell us what to do. Do not be afraid—I shall not leave you; you can rest on my shoulder, and he will feel your pulse.’

Randolph came to the other side of the sufferer, and looking as professional as he could, put a question or two, observed her with much attention, and then taking a tiny phial out of his case, put some globules into her mouth according to rule; a proceeding which seemed to astound Lady Adelaide as much as it did the patient. This done, he beckoned her aside. She laid the woman gently down, and obeyed. At that moment they were physician and nurse, and nothing else.

‘That poor thing wants nourishment.’

‘I know she does, but I have not been able to find anything here to give her. The little one says there was some left for them, but “Ally” had it all. There was a girl lounging about a little while ago, but she ran away when I beckoned, and has not returned.’

‘How long have you been here?’ asked Randolph, gently.

‘An hour, I believe—it seemed much longer. Never mind me; what do you advise?’

‘First, that we send off our liberal friend in the gig. Where is he to go for lodgings?’

Lady Adelaide took a leaf out of her pocket-book, and wrote a few lines. ‘The old man has a room in his cottage that he never uses, but he has rejected all lodgers hitherto. However, to oblige me, I think he will break through his rule. There is more goodness of heart about him than his neighbours believe; and at any rate, his fear will not be a hindrance, for he fears nothing.’

‘Nothing?’ repeated Randolph, shaking his head.

‘Nothing on this side of the grave. On the other he fears too much, and Cannymoor charity takes him at his own valuation. Do not believe all you hear, sir, or you may be led into great injustice unintentionally.’

'I find so, in more cases than one,' said he, gravely; and hurried away to his friend.

'Mr. Spindler, Lady Adelaide requests you will drive as fast as you can to Cannymoor—hire the cart you talked of, and send it with a mattress and blankets directly. Here is your authority for securing a lodging.'

Curiosity overcoming fear, Mr. Spindler took the slip of paper without hesitation, and read it eagerly.

'Whew,' whistled he, 'Sergeant Wade! the old curmudgeon that nobody is allowed to go near! He has never let me into his house since he went into it.'

'Try what Lady Adelaide's name will do, at any rate. She makes as sure of his readiness to oblige her as of yours.'

'She is vastly condescending, upon my word! Is there anything else she is pleased to want while she is about it?'

'Yes, I see the very thing she wants most—Miss Chatterley will excuse our robbing her store-room for a day or two; and he sprang into the carriage, and began to fill his pockets with booty. 'Arrowroot, just the thing, and a few of these rusks—an orange or two—capital; I won't keep you a minute, my dear sir, I assure you.'

'I won't keep *you*, you mean,' gasped Mr. Spindler, in great dismay; 'take anything you please, so long as you account to Susan for it all—I wash my hands of it, only get out of my gig. Take her ladyship's letter with you, and here,' as Randolph, with his hands full, was turning away, 'I must add my mite—you need not come nearer—hold out your hand.'

Randolph, expecting a sovereign at least, thrust the letter into his coat-pocket with other things, and skilfully caught the gift flung to him—a hard biscuit. He very nearly bowled it back again into the gig, but Mr. Spindler had already pushed on, and it was not worth while to quarrel with him.

As he returned, he heard Lady Adelaide calling him. He flew to the spot; she was kneeling to support the wretched stranger, and one glance at the livid face resting against her shoulder, accounted for the alarm and distress painted on her own. There was indeed no time to be lost, but Maurice spoke cheerfully, and the sight of the food he had brought relieved Adelaide in part of the terror that had seized her, lest the woman should expire under her hands before help could arrive. Her eyes thanked him gratefully, and not daring to quit her post in the exhausted condition of her charge, she watched, half sadly, half amused, the energetic proceedings of Maurice Randolph, as with all the skill of a backwoodsman, he revived the smouldering fire, boiled the black kettle, and fell to work cooking with a tin can and a horn spoon as busy

as any old nurse. The little girl, attracted by the blaze, came running to warm her hands, and to whimper her complaints of being 'so hungry.' 'Come,' thought Maurice, 'Mr. Spindler's charity is more to the purpose than I thought;' and he gave her the biscuit; but before she had half devoured it, the remainder was snatched from her hands, and Randolph, turning at her cry, saw a wild-looking elf, with long black hair, standing grinning defiance at him and her.

The woman and her little one were evidently mere wanderers, probably fallen from a respectable position; but this was a gipsy born and bred, olive-tinted, dark-eyed, and villainously precocious in the hardihood and cunning of the features. Her eyes glanced curiously over his person, then over that of the kneeling lady; and after a minute's hesitation, she seated herself by the fire, and coolly munched the biscuit she had seized, her white teeth gleaming whenever she stopped to grin, which was pretty often.

'You are a cool hand, certainly,' said Maurice.

She nodded, and made a grimace like a baboon.

'Is that poor woman related to you?'

A shake of the head, and another contortion expressive of contempt.

'Why are you left with her, then? To take care of her?'

A shrug of the shoulders, and a wide, malicious grin.

'A pretty creature you must be, to see a poor soul sinking, and a little one hungry, and think only of yourself! I know those who, if they knew it, would make you remember it too—ah, I do, for all your grimacing. Don't you hear how she is crying now?'

She turned her head sulkily in that direction, but made no answer, and he had no more time to bestow upon her; for the roaring of the child as it ran to its mother, had roused her from her stupor, only to bring on a state of agitation that was more alarming still. Lady Adelaide attempted to soothe them both in vain, and her warm expression of thankfulness, when Randolph ran to them with the can of arrowroot he had so skilfully prepared in defiance of difficulties, sent a thrill to his heart, that he would have found it rather hard work to explain.

It was a singular thing to see these two, with the broad gulf between their hearts, bridged over, as it were, for the moment, by an impulse of Christian charity towards a third party, a stranger to them both. No one who had seen how carefully and gently they tended her, how anxiously they watched as she slowly and painfully swallowed the food Lady Adelaide administered, how they looked at each other for sympathy or counsel, and read every glance and sign like old and intimate friends—would have believed *how* they had recently met after nearly eleven years' separation.

Unawares to herself, a sense of protection and support in the presence of that strong will and clear judgment, stole over the spirits of Adelaide Lyndon, so long accustomed to think and act for others, or to be harassed by opinions on which she could not rely. She had no time now to analyse the sensation, to discover how it was that, instead of the bitter sarcastic censor she had shrunk from encountering again, she seemed suddenly to have found, as though risen from the dead, the lost friend of earlier days. She was not even conscious that it was so; still less how, at every gentle word, every sweet smile, every tender and considerate action that revealed her better nature, that passionate heart was beating again with the pulses of its youth—as if those long years of resentment and absence were but a dream of yesterday.

The child having received a share of the food, left off fretting, and ran off to play; the warm nourishment wonderfully revived the poor mother, and she was able to look up in Lady Adelaide's face, and bless her for her goodness. The tears stood in her eyes as she did so; it was so long, she said, since she had heard a kind word from a lady, and she had thought she never should again. 'I was not always such a miserable object as I am now, ma'am—oh no, no! but it was my own doing—my own doing. You don't know what a poor lost creature you are touching, dear lady, not fit for such an angel to come near. Oh, sir, you won't let me be taken up, will you? I wouldn't be a vagrant if I could help it; and I have been so ill, and what will become of my poor little one?'

Randolph assured her she should be molested by nobody; their intentions were all in kindness, but nothing should be done without her consent. Would she object to being taken to a lodging, which the lady had sent to prepare for her, and being nursed there quietly, till she was strong enough to think about doing something for herself? Object! it sounded like a paradise to the poor wanderer, who, it was but too evident, was quite unfitted to bear the exposure and hardship of her vagrant life. She kissed Lady Adelaide's hand, murmuring blessings and thanks.

'Oh! to sleep on a bed with a Christian roof over my head again!' she murmured. 'I was born and bred respectable, ma'am, and in the fear of God. I was indeed, though so wretched now; and had schooling too, and have had good places in gentlemen's families. Oh, dear, dear, dear! it was all my own doing, ma'am—my own doing!'

'Ah,' said Adelaide, mildly, 'there are few of us who may not say the same of all our troubles; let who will be hard upon us, we have generally ourselves to blame. But take courage, we will hope your worst days are over; and when you have regained your

strength, who knows but that you may redeem the time, and become as respectable and respected as you say your parents were—as you wish your little one to be?’

‘God bless you, ma’am, for saying so; it is too late for me, but if you can save *her* from becoming what I am, I’ll bless you with my last breath. There’s one of my burdens at least that she’ll not have to bear, poor lamb—and that has been the heaviest of all—yes, it has.’

‘And what was that?’ asked Lady Adelaide, who thought the kindest thing to do was to encourage her to relieve her poor burdened heart; though Randolph, in his medical capacity, shook his head, and wished she would keep quiet. This seemed impossible; she clung to Lady Adelaide, and with a voice broken by her sobs and feeble breath, poured out the tale of her woes—one, alas! too often told.

She had fallen into bad company while in service, and formed an engagement with a young man, connected, as she afterwards found, with a gang of professed thieves. He had persuaded her to rob her mistress; she did it at first, she said, only to get out of debt, which she had run into for smart clothes; but having done it once with impunity, it was easy to tempt her again. The second time she was detected and sent to jail. Yes, the dear lady was holding up the head of a thief who had been in prison, and who, after she came out, had lived among them ever since. ‘And it wasn’t my wish to do it, ma’am—oh no, it wasn’t! The kind gentleman, the chaplain at Y—— jail, told me if I repented heartily I should be forgiven, and have grace to begin afresh, and lead a new life; and I did repent—yes, indeed I did. I would have given the whole world to begin afresh, as he said; but oh, ma’am, when I came out, nobody would give me a chance—nobody would trust me, or give me work, or try me in any way—and what could I do?’

The result was that she married her former tempter, and as he was, with all his faults, kinder to her in the main than some honest men might have been, deplorable as was their way of subsistence, she wanted for nothing while he lived. Since his death, left without health, character, or money, what she had gone through no one could tell, least of all herself. In the course of the dreadful winter, she had fallen in with some gipsies who had been her husband’s friends, and her only resource against starvation had been to join them. ‘They were kind to me, ma’am, in their way—there’s good and bad among ’em—and I thought it didn’t much matter where I ended my days now, and that I shouldn’t care how soon; but when I was took downright ill, it did seem dreadful to die like that—dreadful! However, I got better, and they brought me along with them as far as here, and then I was so weak, they left me to go to

the next town; and after they were gone, and no one was near but those children—oh, ma'am, when I heard your sweet voice asking what you could do for me, it sounded like an angel from heaven in my extremity, it did—for everything seemed to be passing away from me, and I couldn't pray. I knew He would not hear me—my mother told me that long ago.'

'Your mother?' said Lady Adelaide.

'Ah, yes, ma'am. She is a great deal better than I, such a wonderful good woman! If I had only obeyed her always, and kept out of gay company, I should have been a different creature now; but I would go my own way, and please myself, and she told me what it would come to, and that she would never own me again if I once disgraced her—and I have. The kind gentleman at the jail did write to ask if she would take me in when my time was out; but no answer ever came, and I durstn't write myself, or go. And now, whenever I have tried to pray—and oh, how I have longed to hear a word of prayer!—I seemed to hear her telling me, as she did the last time I saw her, that I was a castaway and a child of wrath; and I could not find a word to say. Oh! it has been my worst trouble all along, that anger of my mother's; for I felt God would never forgive me till she did. Whatever my poor Betsy may do to me, I'll try hard to spare her *that*. But now, perhaps—' she looked wistfully in Lady Adelaide's face, and saw her eyes full of tears; 'perhaps *you*, ma'am, who look so kind, and are so good and so pure—*you* wouldn't mind putting up a bit of a prayer for a poor lost creature. I am sure He would hear *you*, and then, maybe——'

Her voice and strength failed, and she lay with the tears trickling down her cheeks, her hollow, imploring eyes continuing the supplication that she had not power to utter. Lady Adelaide, wrung to the core, feeling it cruel to refuse, and impossible to comply, in her turn looked beseechingly at Randolph. Sad and humble was the language of that look, and it drooped before his as he had never seen it yet.

Right well did he read its meaning. He, too, was moved by the piteous appeal of the object of his charity, but there were few good offices he would not rather have been asked to render. A sense of shame and embarrassment darkened the brown of his cheek, as the conviction forced itself on his conscience that, with all his knowledge of books and the world—all his self-reliance, his abilities, his traveller's experience—when a perishing fellow-being called upon him for a word of spiritual consolation, he actually knew not what to say.

Yet he was one whose reason, whose intellectual powers, were all on the side of truth. He could own and admire the traces of the great Designer in the wonders of creation, and acknowledge

the force of the evidence heaped together in behalf of revealed religion. His sense and judgment told him that piety was wisdom ; he revered all that he saw pure, and lovely, and of good report ; nothing was wanting to his Christianity, but that it should be *practical*. And when *that* is wanting, in the hour of fear or grief, miserable comforters are all the rest ! He saw this now, perhaps, for the first time ; at any rate, more distinctly than he had ever done before, and it by no means added to his composure. He was beginning to murmur some excuse, when the poor woman, thinking, from their hesitation, they both considered her too bad to pray for, burst into tears, and clasping her wasted hands, sobbed out that her mother was right ; nobody could or would say a word for a poor lost creature, when she was dying under God's curse and hers. And then came a cry of despair, and Lady Adelaide's face grew pale as ashes.

'Hush, hush !' she said, in agitation she could not control, 'poor thing, poor thing ! Yes, we will—here, I am kneeling by you ; I know what your grief is, I have shared it—I share it still. Send up your poor heart to God—He is more merciful than man—He is all goodness—all mercy—He will hear us both !' and she did make the attempt, but the words died on her lips ; and Randolph, roused by the sight of her distress, began what constant repetition happily renders so familiar to the memory, that no Churchman need ever be at a loss for words—the Confession in the Liturgy.

He chose this as being the first that occurred to him at the moment ; but as the sentences came slowly and emphatically forth, their eloquent beauty, so appropriate and so comprehensive, struck them all as they never had before. Randolph's strong voice trembled, and his eyes grew moist, as he uttered the petition so expressive of the soul's deepest wants : 'Spare thou them, O God, that confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent !' The unhappy outcast, so long cut off from public ordinances and means of grace, followed every word with avidity, as if each was a life-giving drop to her thirsting spirit. Lady Adelaide's head sank lower and lower, and silently and fast fell her tears. Who could read the secret of those three hearts, or tell what it was the still small voice was saying to each ?—the voice so often stifled, that yet will find moments and occasions to speak—whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear !

The silence that followed was first broken by a cry from the child. She had forgotten her troubles in playing with the old donkey ; and Ally, the gipsy, tired of having no mischief to do, had amused herself by teasing them both, which teasing had progressed into beating. The donkey being used to it, took it philosophically ; but the child, secure of sympathy, roared louder



perhaps than there was absolute occasion for, which soon brought Randolph to the rescue. Catching the elf by her long black locks, he dragged her without ceremony to the bedside, and asked her in threatening terms how she dared behave so? The poor woman said she was a hard little creature, and a cruel—she wouldn't even give her a drop of water to drink, and treated her poor Betsy shameful—she did. In reply to this, the girl poured out a volley of abuse, that made the invalid cower under her blankets, and the child run for protection to Lady Adelaide. A smart box on the ear from Mr. Randolph cut short this display of eloquence, but excited her passion to a fearful degree. With eyes glaring like a little tiger cat, she seemed in the act of making a spring, when a few sharp stern words in the gipsy dialect stopped her. The effect was instantaneous; the demoniacal expression relaxed, and her voice became the true Romany whine.

'What a clever, learned gentleman! he can talk like the poor gipsies, so he can; and he is almost a gipsy himself, with his dark hair and nut-brown skin. What a happy lady *his* lady will be! Please to give the poor gipsy girl a sixpence, for the good news she could tell you if you crossed her hand!'

'*I give thee sixpence! Take care how you cross *my* hand again, that is all. My fortune was told me long ago.*'

The girl laughed loudly, and clapped her hands over her head.

'And did they tell the brown gentleman what the gipsy girl could tell him? Did he know about the handsome lady with dark eyes, who loves the very ground he treads upon? Oh! did they tell him that? Yes, yes, the gipsy girl knows what she knows, and she could show him what *they* couldn't: how the handsome lady could blush when he was talked about—for all the world like a sunrise when you are going to have a precious stormy day!'

An involuntary impulse, regretted as soon as followed, turned Randolph's eyes on Lady Adelaide Lyndon. She was indeed blushing deeply; but the instant she saw him observe it, the glow grew deeper still. She rose from her position by the sick bed, her whole bearing suddenly transformed; and a great deal more scorn looked beautiful in the contempt and anger of her lip than Maurice at all liked, as she requested he would be good enough to carry on the discussion a little further off, where it could not disturb the poor woman under their care.

He stood motionless—stung with the maddening thoughts that rushed upon him in a moment.

'Yes, yes, my handsome gentleman, take the lady's advice; you will be sorry enough by and by that you gave the gipsy girl knocks instead of fair words—ay, ay, you will, maybe, before the sun goes down. One little sixpence, my noble gentleman, just for the sake

of the beautiful lady that looks so kind at you, and loves you so true !'

'I'll break every bone in your skin, you saucy imp !' cried he, turning upon her in intense wrath ; but she was too quick for him this time—darted under his arm, and in spite of a vigorous chase, escaped out of his reach ; the echo of her jeering laugh ringing in the distance, as if to aggravate his mortification.

'But it is as well—quite as well—' he muttered, as he came slowly back, and cast one glance at the form near the bed, that so short a time before had been bending with him in prayer ; 'a little more, and I should have forgotten all, and become again the blind fool I was once. I am once more myself ; that scornful look has made a man of me—thanks for your gentle service, gipsy girl !'

Alas ! he little knew the mischief she had done—and was yet to do.

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## CHAPTER IX.

The sickening pang of hope deferred.—*Scott.*

THE benevolent feelings of Mr. Spindler, when he found himself actually employed in a work of disinterested charity that was to cost him nothing, were of an enviable description ; and like all amiable qualities, constituted in themselves their own reward. After making a bargain for the cart and horse, and the mattress and blankets, in which not a peg was left for the most astute manager to hang a liability on against himself—and despatching the conveyance to the quarry, with a hint about Mr. Randolph's liberality to those who served him well ;—after doing this, and stopping occasionally to tell the whole story to everybody, gentle or simple, whom he chanced to meet, he turned his horse's unwilling head from the direction of his stable, to the cottage of Sergeant Wade, on the moor. It was an errand that, besides its benevolence gratis, possessed the attraction of gratifying a very reasonable curiosity ; for in spite of numerous attempts, never once had he been admitted inside the mysterious old man's premises. As he drove up, he saw Stephen Ball lounging over his father's gate, and beckoned him to hold the horse. Stephen came reluctantly, doubtful of recompense, and murmuring something about being busy.

'Busy, are you, my man ? Well, I will tell her ladyship I called you from your work, and she will remember you. All well at home ?'

'Oh, ah, pretty middlin',' said Stephen. 'I'm quite well.'

'That's right ; then you won't be alarmed if you hear of putrid fever in the neighbourhood, I dare say. It is not always catching, and when it is, people don't always die.'

'I say——' began Stephen, uneasily.

'No, don't blame me; *I* have nothing to do with it. I ~~am~~ only here to oblige my friend, Lady Adelaide Lyndon, and to render a poor woman a service, which we must always be ready to do, Stephen, you know. There, hold your tongue, for I am in a hurry to see old Wade.'

'Hurry or no hurry, you'll be like to wait a bit,' quoth Stephen.

He stood grinning as Mr. Spindler, unfastening the gate with some difficulty, began to knock at the door; he knew how long he might do that without being attended to, and as there was nothing particular to knock with, it was an amusement of which people soon grew tired. Mr. Spindler, however, was not easily daunted. When his knuckles had had enough of it, he tried what kicking would do, and then fetched the gig whip, and plied the handle vigorously, and shook the door till it rattled again—all to no purpose.

'Is the old curmudgeon stone deaf, Stephen, or do you think he is away from home?'

'Not he, sir; he's just sittin' in his chair, a-makin' game of you, I'll be bound. It's just *nuts* to him to hear you, it is.'

'Nuts, is it? I'll try and crack them for him, then. I'll be even with him yet for his insolence, if I once get his cottage into my hands. Here!' (roaring at the top of his voice.) 'Wade! Sergeant! Sergeant Wade! Hill-o-a! House! I want to *speak* with you. I come on particular *business*! Sergeant Wade! *Wade!* W-a-d-e!'

All the Ball family, attracted by the noise, came out, baby and all, to see what was going on. Enraged at his failure before so many spectators, Abel renewed his assault upon the churlish door, and at last with deserved success; for as he was in the act of rushing against it with all his might, it suddenly opened, and he fell head foremost into the arms of a tall old man, with a shaggy beard, and general expression inhospitable, not to say unpleasantly threatening.

Before Mr. Spindler could recover himself from the affectionate attitude so unwittingly assumed, this gaunt figure had very coolly possessed himself of the gig whip; then with the other hand laying hold of his visitor, he held him at arm's length, with the stern inquiry, 'Now, sir, what is the meaning of all this?'

'What indeed!' panted Mr. Spindler, in great wrath; 'what do *you* mean by treating gentlemen like this, keeping them outside your door like dogs, hammering till they are stiff in the joints, and bawling at you till they are hoarse? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!'

'Ought I?' said the old man, relinquishing his hold, and eyeing him from head to foot; 'very well, sir; then I will.' And he drew back as if to shut the door, but Mr. Spindler caught his sleeve. 'What do you want, sir?'

The question was so menacing that the answer came rather in a hurry. 'Why, sergeant, I understand you have a room to let.'

'No, I have not, sir. Good morning.'

'Stop, stop, stop! I don't mean that; but you have a room to spare.'

'I choose to live by myself, sir, thank you; so——'

'Well, but hear a man speak, can't you, before you slam your door in his face? It is a case of charity, this is—a poor woman without a home.'

'Indeed, sir? Then the best thing you can do is to take care of her yourself. I have a notion your house is bigger than mine.'

'My house? yes, of course it is; but don't you see it is a bad case from a gipsy camp—fever, I believe—and you are here, only a single man. You should be accommodating and neighbourly.'

The old man's eyes lighted up fiercely under his shaggy brows: 'I tell ye, I'm neighbour to none of ye—none! I want nothing, I ask nothing of any one of ye, and I mean to do nothing for *you*. You are a set of prying, lying, interfering, tattling busybodies, man, woman, and child, that I wouldn't let cross my threshold, if I were dying! Go—I have nothing to do with you, nor you with me——' And with the whip ominously ready in his hand, he made a step forward, that rendered a backward one on the part of his visitor a matter of necessity. Out of all patience, Mr. Spindler turned to Stephen in great dudgeon, exclaiming, 'What could Lady Adelaide Lyndon mean by sending me to be insulted by such a churlish old fellow as this?'

'Lady Adelaide Lyndon?' repeated the sergeant, in an altered tone.

'Yes, to be sure; a very particular friend of mine, who asked me as a great favour to come to you, or I am sure I should not have given myself all this trouble. But I shall tell her how I was received. I'll trouble you to give me my whip.'

Sergeant Wade made a stride in advance, took Mr. Spindler by the arm, and put him into the house as if he had been a doll. 'Now, sir, if you please—Lady Adelaide's orders.'

'These are the only orders I have received. If they are not satisfactory, don't blame me. Mind! I have nothing to do with the rent—you must settle that with her.'

The sergeant put on a large pair of horn spectacles, and carefully perused the torn scrap of paper offered him, on which was hurriedly written, 'If Sergeant Wade can spare his empty room for a short time to a sick woman and her child, he will greatly oblige Lady Adelaide Lyndon.' 'Very well, sir,' said he, as he locked the document up in a small iron box, evidently containing his treasures: 'her ladyship shall be obeyed. Is that all?'

'Well, about all, I believe,' said Mr. Spindler, trying to be easy and chatty, and eyeing the room with much curiosity. 'A snug little tenement this, eh? You rent it of old Diggles, don't you? Ay, ay, he owns one or two of the cottages about, and a precious close fist you find him, no doubt. Now *my* tenants——'

'I ask no favour of any one, sir—unless it be that they will let me alone.'

'Quite right, quite right. A respectable man never should ask favours—especially of his landlord. And you have made it look quite barrack like, with that rolled-up bed, and all your traps in such order. Why, you must almost expect to hear the bugle call for parade at six in the morning, eh?'

It had, indeed, quite a soldierly appearance, this room where the moody old man passed his nights and days. There were pegs, and racks, and shelves, put up by his own hands, for holding everything in its proper place; his cooking utensils shone like silver; his floor was scrupulously clean: a few books, carefully preserved, their bindings evidently mended by himself, were on a chest; and one of these, the visitor saw at a glance, was a Bible.

'Why, sergeant, you are a reader, I see—and of *that* book, too! Your neighbours all declare you do not believe in it!'

'Perhaps they say I don't use *that*, either,' said the old soldier, grimly, with a gesture of his thumb at a bayonet that hung over his chimney. 'Yet I could, if I thought it of any use.'

'Well, but my good friend, you are a Christian I hope?'

'Why, sir? Are *you*?'

'Of course I am. What did you think I was?'

'*Think* you were? A Mammon worshipper—that's what *you* are.'

'Eh, eh—what?' stammered Mr. Spindler, considerably taken aback.

'What? don't you know what that means, sir? You, a gentleman, and educated, that take pleasure in giving good advice to the poor, if you give them nothing else? Look ye, man! I warn ye, don't come with your advice and teaching to me. For every text you could quote, I could give you a dozen. I knew that Book as soon as you did, and maybe before; and if I would—and often I would—forget it, I can't. And I know what is said there of lip-service, and loving the world, and of the snare into which they fall who *will* be rich; ay, and that he who makes haste about it will hardly be innocent. I know all about it, sir, and more than you might like to hear—and it is my curse that I do—as it will one day be *yours*!'

'Upon my word, I had better go,' thought our friend Abel, moving to the door; 'but there is one thing I must find out first,

come what may.' 'I am going, sergeant—I don't want to intrude upon you. You admit ladies, I suppose, to see you—Lady Adelaide is often here, I think?'

'Sir, some ladies took the trouble of coming several times to tell me I must go to church, and I must read their books; and to ask me a great many questions about my ways and means of living, which they would have thought very impertinent if I had asked *them*. I told them, once for all, I liked to be left to myself, and I kept them out ever after. My lady comes as politely as if she were calling on a general, and never interferes about my habits, nor gives me one word of advice that I don't ask for, nor does a thing she wouldn't do in the house of the first lord of the land: and she is a *real* lady, sir, and has seen service, and done it too, in her time; and it is an honour to me, when she condescends to set foot inside my door. Her orders shall be obeyed about the room; and, with your leave, it is time for me to see about getting it ready.'

And with that he quietly put his visitor out, as easily as he had taken him in.

Mr. Spindler got into his gig in rather a spiteful frame of mind. Stephen touched his cap insinuatingly. 'Queer customer that 'ere, sir—you managed him at last, though. Please to remember me, sir—'

'With great pleasure, my dear young friend; your countenance is too striking to be forgotten. Thank ye. Good afternoon!'

'Not a sixpence, sir?' persisted Stephen.

'Sixpence, eh! Very sorry, but no change. I'll tell my lady, though—it is entirely her affair, bringing sick gipsies into the place. Take care of your little ones, Mrs. Ball, I advise you: it may be scarlet fever, or typhus, for all I know.'

With which consolatory remark, he drove away, leaving consternation and wrath behind him.

Luckily for all parties, the next person he met was Dr. Home, to whom the news had just come in a very garbled state, and who was on his way to ascertain the real state of the case. As soon as he heard Mr. Spindler's version, in which he took most of the credit to himself, he shook him heartily by the hand, with much praise for his kindness—received by that gentleman with becoming modesty—and declared he should send Colly at once to Sergeant Wade's. 'Colly makes friends with everybody: I defy even that crabbed old bit of pipe-clay to quarrel with her; and she knows everybody, and will find some one to go as nurse, I dare say. She shall take a supply of comforts; we will not let the work you have begun so well fall to the ground—depend upon it, Spindler. *That* is the way to invest your money—for it brings a sure return!'

'Eh, eh? yes, very true—but, Doctor, one word! I have entered

into no engagement—I am not responsible to anybody for anything; mind that. It is not my way. What I give, I give, and it is nobody's affair whether it be much or little—and I don't mind trouble or fatigue, as you see, to do a kindness: but as an old man of business, I never take any responsibilities—they would only harass me. Your rich friend, Mr. Randolph, and her ladyship, are the parties you must look to—do you hear?’

‘Oh—!’ was all Dr. Home's reply, as he turned upon his heel; and Mr. Spindler, rejoicing in his dexterity, drove on to the Manorhouse, to disburden his mind of intelligence, and his pocket of letters.

The colouring he gave to his story there was possibly intended as a return to the fair widow for the trouble she had given him. When Lady Adelaide, after seeing her charges safely housed, with Colly looking after them, arrived at home, not a little fatigued, she was received with a storm of reproaches and precautionary measures. One wanted to fumigate her with hot vinegar—another begged her to stand in a thorough draught for half an hour: there was more than one hint thrown out of her keeping her room until the medical man could be fetched from Shareham; and it was only by dint of urgent and repeated remonstrance, that she was permitted to compromise the matter by changing her dress, and submitting to a plentiful sprinkling of camphorated spirits. This Penelope administered herself, with a grimly conspicuous look of resignation as one who knew the risk she ran, and was resolved everybody else should know it too.

‘No, my dear Adelaide,’ when her sister-in-law begged her not to trouble herself, ‘if you, at your age, *will* do such wild, not to say wicked things, it is for *me* to see that nobody suffers from them. I know my duty, and shall do it, though I get no thanks.’

Lady Adelaide, too weary to argue the point, went on dressing in silence; thankful that nothing worse than camphor was being showered so liberally on her unfortunate tweed cloak. Miss Lyndon continued her lecture with her precautions.

‘I shall do my duty, I hope, *always*, thank you, Adelaide—whatever may be the risk. I should consider it very foolish, very wrong, to run into danger unnecessarily, and expose others to it, just to gratify my own desire for notoriety or excitement; but where it comes in the way of *duty*, I can face it, I hope, as well as another. I must say, I think you might have considered my father a little, knowing, as you do, how fearful he is of infection. I mentioned it to you before you went out, if you remember.’

‘I am very sorry,’ said Lady Adelaide, overwhelmed with all these accusations, ‘very sorry to give trouble and cause anxiety; but you would have done the same in my place—anybody would.’

‘Don’t talk to me ; I am as compassionate as most people—but I do not go about picking up gipsies in fevers and small-pox, to bring infection home. Have I not heard you refuse fifty times to visit our poor folks, and say that their own neighbours could nurse them better than we could ? And then you go making yourself conspicuous by doing so mad a thing as this ! I have no patience with you, I declare !’

Miss Lucy, who came in, armed with a basin of disinfecting fluid, followed on the same side.

‘Gracious, my dear, how could you ?—but it was all meant for the best, I dare say, all your kindness, and dear good Mr. Spindler’s too—what a good-natured man he is ! I always say he would do anybody for anything—anything for anybody, I mean ; it was all his consideration for us, bringing us the news, and frightening us all out of our wits ; he seemed quite wretched about you, and my father was like a distracted creature at the very idea, and I’m sure I don’t know what we should have done if you had not come home soon. I thought I should have dropped flat on the floor, and it was a mercy I recollected I had a cup and saucer in my hand, as it might be this basin now. Where shall it stand, Adelaide dear ? I don’t know exactly what you are to do with it, but everybody says it is a very fine thing. And now do tell me all your adventures from the very beginning, about dear Mr. Randolph and all ; because when you begin to get feverish, you know, you will not be allowed to talk.’

The dinner-bell happily saved her sister-in-law from the necessity of complying, and all Lucy could do was to insist on giving her the support of her arm down stairs, which as she was short and Adelaide was tall, was being more attentive than usual.

‘Come, my dear, how do you feel now ? Only a little tired ? Not too much so to enjoy our nice little rubber as usual ? That’s right ; for between ourselves, we ought to be particularly happy and cheerful to-night, as I am sure papa has had disagreeable news ; he has been out of sorts ever since he got that letter this afternoon, and Pen thinks the same, only she won’t own it.’

‘A letter ? has the post come in, then ?’

‘Oh no, it is too soon ; but good Mr. Spindler called at the post-office, and brought us ours. There were none for anybody but my father.’

Adelaide sighed with disappointment, and found it rather difficult to take the hint about happiness and cheerfulness, especially as Mr. Lyndon was in one of his most trying moods ; so that it required all the patience she could muster to bear the manner in which he persisted in considering her an invalid—of that peculiar disorder, for which no name has ever been discovered by the



faculty, but whose treatment consists in never being allowed to do a single thing in peace. If she went near the fire, it would make her feverish; if near the door, she would give herself a chill; want of appetite was an infallible symptom of approaching indisposition, and everything at table was just the very worst thing she could touch. The evening was varied by light skirmishes with and about Walter, who being told not to keep so close to his mamma, and already in a state of mutiny from the loss of his walk to the quarry, was perpetually turning up at her elbow when she least expected it; and she was worried at last into despatching him to bed, with only aunt Lucy to put out his candle. This being the height of insult, a pitched battle on the landing was the consequence; and it was not till Lucy had retreated in breathless discomfort, grandpapa had thundered from the bottom of the stairs, and aunt Penelope nearly reached the top—that a compromise was effected, by his blowing his candle out in her face, and scrambling into bed in the dark. All this, of course, materially improved the spirits of the company in general; and in short, Mr. Lyndon, though he never actually scolded his daughter-in-law, took care she should do sufficient penance for her transgression, to deter her from ever committing it again. Indeed, she might have been tempted to wish she had let her work of charity alone, if the night had not proved so wet and stormy, that the thought of the poor woman and her child, safely housed, was the best consolation she could have had under the vexations and disappointment of the day.

Nobody, who has ever noticed—and who has not?—the wonderful property a story possesses of growing, as it moves in a given circle, will be surprised to hear that Cannymoor, gentle and simple, was, for the next six-and-thirty hours at least, in a complete ferment of terror and wrath. That a gang of gipsies with putrid fever had been brought into the village, was the mildest form of the report that caused many a sleepless night, and spoiled half the breakfasts in the place. Miss Chatterley was in immense request, as being in possession of Mr. Spindler's private opinion; and that was so decidedly unfavourable, that what the inquirers lost in facts, was fully made up in dreary prognostications. Everybody agreed it was, to say the least of it, a most unjustifiable, unpardonable, insane proceeding, and that the neighbourhood ought to take some decided step before the consequences spread any farther. And so it fell out, that about the same time that Mrs. Ball, in one of her worst 'historical fits,' as Colly called them, was pouring out her fears and resentment at the rectory, and getting a pungent lecture and three globules in a wine-glassful of water from Mr. Randolph for her pains—a deputation of the most nervous of the ladies

waited on Miss Lyndon, to give vent to their terrors, and receive the balm of her sympathy and advice.

Very summarily did Penelope dispose of the matter. She had so thoroughly relieved her own feelings the evening before, that she was now quite ready to pooh-pooh those of other people. The whole affair had been exaggerated; it was nothing to make a fuss about, only some people could never be content with doing kindnesses at home quietly, but must go hunting up extraordinary objects of charity to make pets of, and attract everybody's notice. She was not prepared to say there was no risk of fever, as those low people were never safe or agreeable neighbours; but she washed her hands of it. It was entirely her sister's affair; a sudden fit of goodness, that must have its course, and to which everything else must give place, while it lasted. She was sorry they had frightened themselves for nothing; but they need only keep away from the cottage, as they always had done, and she confessed she could not conceive that much harm could happen to them.

The deputation, comforted a little by this, ventured to inquire, if it was true that her ladyship had resolved to settle the poor creatures in Cannymoor, that she might devote herself entirely to the reformation and maintenance of the woman, and the education of the child? Miss Lyndon had heard nothing of it, and wondered at any one who had not more sense than to believe such stuff. In the first place, her sister had not the patience; and in the second, she had not the means. 'Don't flatter yourselves,' was her parting benediction, 'that you will not be called upon to contribute, every one of you; for I can tell you, none of *us* have any money to spare, and Adelaide least of all.'

This was a new feature of the business; and though it startled at first, it gradually assumed a more popular aspect. As the fear of the ladies diminished, their regard for their own importance and dignity returned; and it began to strike them all that their experience in benevolent undertakings, as a body, was held much too cheaply in this matter; they ought to have been consulted and applied to, before any new pensioner was brought into the place in that thoughtless kind of way; Mr. Randolph must really suppose the ladies of Cannymoor were just nobody at all. However, they must be appealed to soon, and then they would express their opinion; Lady Adelaide would, of course, try and raise a subscription for her *protégées*, and very willing were they to assist, as far as their means allowed, in any good work—but they should feel it their duty to give her a little plain advice, at the same time, about the too little regard she paid to other people. No doubt this would have been extremely wholesome; and so popular became the idea, that if Lady Adelaide had only fulfilled the general expectation,

and solicited contributions in person, she would most likely have collected a much larger sum than Dr. Home could ever raise on ordinary occasions. But it was the last thing that would have occurred to her. The very fact of its being a case beyond the jurisdiction of the ladies' committee, was what removed the leading objection she had hitherto felt to cottage visiting. Here was a woman whom nobody would receive, lodging in a house that nobody dared to visit; the spirit of contradiction must have been hard to please indeed, if this offered no inducement. It would be only owning of her what we might always own of ourselves, if we admitted a little mingling of her besetting sin with the energy of her benevolence; but energetic it was, and had need to be. When she was following the impulse of humanity, she was not at all aware of the heavy responsibility she was undertaking: but neither would she shrink from it afterwards. How the sinews of charity were to be supplied, when her small income was already insufficient, notwithstanding her rigid economy, to satisfy the demands upon it, was a question not to be solved in a hurry; she could only decide that it *should* be done, one way or another, without her being beholden to anybody. Medical advice was procured from Shareham; necessary articles of furniture made the room at Sergeant Wade's wear quite a new aspect; a nurse was provided—the hardest task of all—and a supply of coarse materials were soon in a rapid state of transition into tidy clothes for mother and child. In this last part of the business, Sophy begged hard to take a share; and never felt prouder or happier in her life than when admitted alone into Lady Adelaide's room, to sit in committee on little Betsy's wardrobe, and feast her eyes unobserved on the beautiful face that was the idolatry of her day dreams. Sitting on a cushion, and sewing up a seam, had never before offered her the attraction intended by the poet; but the grandeur of being in Lady Adelaide's confidence, the felicity of being thanked and praised for her kind help, made it quite another thing; and while emulating, at humble distance, the industry of that quick, determined needle, that seemed to walk the calico like a thing of life, and gallop through hopeless difficulties as if it enjoyed them—she contrived to find resemblances for her companion and herself out of her only novelist, the author of 'Waverley'—till what with Margaret Ramsay with the Lady Hermione, and Catherine Seyton with Queen Mary, she had herring-boned more romance into little Betsy's flannel petticoat than has been hammered into many a corslet, or embroidered into many a banner.

Sophy soon found that of all the subjects she discussed with Mr. Randolph, this was the one that interested him most: and proud of being able to interest anybody so clever, she told him

all she knew, and a great deal she thought. She described how Lady Adelaide had shown her some of her treasures, that she kept locked up, and only looked at now and then ; the sweetest little cap and frock you ever saw, made for her baby that died in India—some miniatures that had actually been set round with brilliants once—only think of that ! and then, some lovely pearls, that she said her mother gave her on the last birthday they were together—and very, very sad she looked when she said so. Sophy had not ventured to ask, but was her mother dead ? The real state of the case being briefly explained, she waxed more chivalrous than ever. She should like—yes, that she would—to set off on foot as Elizabeth did in the ‘Exiles of Siberia,’ and hunt out Lady Delaunay, and win her daughter’s pardon on her knees. She could not know half that Lady Adelaide had suffered, or she would not be so cruel—oh ! if she could only have seen how she looked at the pearls, and said she never could part with *them*, if she gave up everything else !

‘And do you know, Mr. Randolph,’ gossiped on Sophy, who was at heart much more of a genuine daughter of Cannymoor than her noble friend was perhaps aware of, ‘I am sure they are the only jewels she has ; and I suppose she is very poor, for she showed me some beautiful point lace that had been *ever* so long in her family, and worn at court in Mr. Horace Walpole’s time, I think she said. Did you ever see Mr. Horace Walpole, Mr. Randolph ? I thought you knew everybody. The lace was very valuable, she said, and much too costly for a poor soldier’s widow, and she meant to try and dispose of it. But it was quite a secret ; so whatever you do, don’t let her know I told you.’

A day or two afterwards, Lady Adelaide happening to be alone with Dr. Home at the Manorhouse, took the opportunity of consulting him on the best method of disposing of some lace in Shareham, without exciting the curiosity of Cannymoor in general, and perhaps causing annoyance at home. She spoke lightly, as if it was comparatively an indifferent matter ; but when she put the lace into his hand, he felt hers tremble, and enclosed it in both his own. ‘You will not offer a sacrifice that costs you nothing, I see, my dear friend. Ay, ay, there is an adorning, that the holy women of old found more becoming even than the finest needlework on both sides, whatever that may be. They never had anything like this, though,’ opening his hands to admire the contents of the parcel ; ‘I am half afraid to touch it. My poor wife had a little once, and prized it very much ; but it was not like this. I warrant now this is a family heir-loom, my dear. You must be sorry to give it up.’

‘I am,’ she said, with a sigh ; ‘my uncle, General Conway, left it to me, and I can remember it from my childhood, and all the old court traditions connected with it. I am sorry to let it go into

strange hands, but, Dr. Home, it is of little consequence as far as I am concerned. The value may be better employed, and it is only being worse than useless here in keeping up recollections, inconsistent with my present station.'

'My dear, what am I to understand by that? I was hoping, from what I have heard of you lately, that you were putting on that ornament I covet most for my friends—the meek and quiet spirit, that is of greater price even than such rare workmanship as this. But now I am in doubt whether this be not the old enemy under a new flag. Is it so?'

'If it is,' she replied, with a sad smile, 'I was not aware of it. You are most likely to be right, for the *resistance* goes on still, wrestle as earnestly as I may. And yet, sir, I am learning my lesson by degrees, hard as it is. Pride with me is as unbecoming as that rich lace would be on my old black dress. When I gave up my self-respect and my peace of mind, I ought to have laid my account with humiliation, and prepared myself to meet and endure it. You must teach me how to gain the strength; I never needed it more than at this moment.'

He pressed her to be open with him; if he really knew her troubles, he could better advise and more profitably help her; and softened by his sympathy, and yearning for comfort, she told him what she had done, and the daily disappointment of waiting for an answer.

'Sometimes I think they will not write at all, but mean to take me by surprise—and a ring at the gate-bell will make my heart beat so that I can hardly breathe. Then I try and persuade myself they are all out of town, and Henry is waiting for their return, and the letter, after all, may come to-morrow. I say that every night; and every day when I am disappointed, comes back your text—"God resisteth the proud," and I feel I am unanswered still. How shall I learn to be humble?—or are there some hearts that nothing will bend without breaking?'

'Now you are taking one part of my prescription, my dear, and leaving out the other, and how can you expect the cure? *Wait!*—that is all you can do—wait in quiet submission and trust; and take delay, suspense, and disappointment as sent from Him. At a moment when you least expect it, and in a way you know not, you may find darkness light before you, and crooked things straight. Meanwhile, I will do all you wish, as far as I can; but I was just thinking, is it a good time for parting with a family treasure, after preserving it so long? Will not your mother be vexed when she knows it?'

'My mother?' she said, with a sigh; 'you little know her, if you suppose she would not prefer my keeping my word, and paying my

debts, to all the heirlooms of Conway and Delaunay put together ; and I need not be ashamed of owing to you, that I am too poor to do so in any other way. So if you can help me, dear sir, and keep my counsel, it will be conferring another benefit where you have already conferred so many, if not quite all you wished.'

Touched by her confidence in him, and full of the warmest sympathy for her troubles and anxieties, the old rector promised to undertake the business for her, provided he might do so in his own way. It had occurred to him, that his best counsellor in the matter would be his friend Maurice, and to him he carried it forthwith. Randolph examined the lace carefully, with all the gravity of a connoisseur.

'Why, Maurice, you look for all the world like a haberdasher. What do you advise me to do?'

'If you have any spare guineas, buy it yourself. It is a very good investment.'

'I have none to invest, my boy.'

'That is unlucky. Well, I have, and I have rather a fancy for old curiosities, as you know. I would as soon take lace as china, every bit ; especially General Conway's. I will get it valued and keep it. That is soon settled.'

'Well ! there is no accounting for taste, nor for the way some people value money. There is that horse of yours at the inn costs you more than a curate's salary, and now you must be *investing*, forsooth, in spiderwork, that only the finest of fine ladies could ever wear—no wife *you* will ever get would venture to put it on, I'll be bound—and all because you have no idea what to do with your money or your time. I doubt you'll run through your fortune now, quicker than you've run through the world, lad.'

For all this, it was with no small complacency that the old gentleman waited a few days afterwards on Lady Adelaide, to put into her hands the liberal price his friend had paid, and to relieve her mind of the painful idea that her family relic should be exposed to public sale. He was rather confounded to see her grow red and pale by turns ; and that while she tried to smile, she crushed the notes in her hand, as if she would have flung them back had she dared. What had he done ? Did she think Maurice Randolph would go and chatter about it all over the place ? Not he ; it was not his way : and as to the obligation, there was none ; for he jumped at the notion of buying it directly, and most likely had some one in his mind to whom it would be a welcome present. But if she was displeased with the transaction, nothing would be easier than to undo it altogether. Recalled to herself by the chagrin of the good old man's voice, Lady Adelaide made a strong effort to regain her command of countenance, and said all that gratitude and courtesy

seemed to require she should say. But such a practical lesson in humility was more than she was prepared for ; and the poor woman who reaped the fruit of her sacrifice, and the worthy neighbours who puzzled their heads hourly, to find out how she contrived to do so much without calling on them to subscribe—little knew that every gift she bestowed, every want she relieved, cost her one of the hardest struggles she had ever gone through in her life.

Her period of suspense, however, ended most unexpectedly.

We have already mentioned Abner the gipsy, of whom Randolph purchased his horse. He had obtained permission to bring it over to Cannymoor himself, and Maurice took the opportunity of inquiring what he knew of the poor wanderers they had found. Abner knew whom he meant ; but the set they were with were not of his tribe, and decidedly what *he* should call low, half and halves, part gipsy, part tramp ; he had seen some of them at the fair, and knew pretty well what *they* were after. Oh, certainly, if he met with them, he would tell them how good the lady and gentleman had been, and if there was anything else that would please his honour, he should be too glad. He was going to another sale of horses in a day or two ; *did* he happen to want such a thing as a neat, clever pony, to ride or drive, in case he *should* happen to fall in with one ? Well, Randolph did not care, provided it was really good ; but since he was willing to oblige him, there was one thing rather on his mind. He described the gipsy girl, her behaviour and her language. Abner nodded complacently ; he saw what the gentleman wanted ; and if plaited leather would do the business, he was not a man to grudge it to oblige him, that he *would* say. Randolph thanked him, but that was not exactly what he wanted.

‘The girl provoked me and I cuffed her ; she told me I should be sorry for it, and I am, not though in the way she supposed. When I told my adventure to the rector, his only remark was, “Well, and what did you do to help the poor untaught lass to grow better ?” Now that had not occurred to me before.’

Abner wondered how it should ; it was not likely that gentlefolks should trouble their heads about young imps like that.

‘Well, but if one wished to do them good, what should you advise ?’

As to that, Abner inclined to plaited leather in liberal proportions, as the only thing likely to be attended to ; but owned the youngsters among them never had much of a chance, and often went wrong for want of any one to make ’em better.

‘Then this one shall have a chance,’ said Randolph, taking out his purse. ‘Find her for me : tell her the brown gentleman who speaks Romany sends her these five shillings, to encourage her to

be kinder to the sick and helpless next time she is with them : and when she is sick herself, she will know the reason why. Tell her, too, if she has a mind to learn how to get an honest living, I will try and put her in the way of it. I have seen that gipsies can be honest, you know, Abner ; and there's for your trouble.'

'Thank ye, sir, and I will do your errand, sharp ; but when all other ways fail, you'll excuse my hoping as you'll not forget the plaited leather. There's nothing encourages the young 'uns like it, nothing. Thank your honour's goodness. If *I* do meet with a neat, clever pony, I'll book him for your honour ; yes, I will.'

Nothing more was heard of Abner or his mission for the next fortnight ; but at the end of that period, Lady Adelaide and Walter happening to pass the rectory, saw Dr. Home, Mr. Randolph, and Sophy at the gate, in earnest consultation with a long-legged fellow in a velveteen jacket, riding a shaggy pony, his own feet very nearly on a level with those of his steed. He was beginning to show off its paces just as they came up, and to Walter's great admiration, the pony galloped, cantered, and trotted with a superb indifference as to the inches of his rider, as if height and weight were matters quite beneath his notice. He held his mother tight with both hands, lest she should move on before his curiosity was satisfied. It soon came to, 'Oh, mamma ! when am *I* to have a pony, as every other gentleman has ?'

'When ?' cried the old rector, as he stepped forward to greet them both—'when your mamma, now considered a sensible, prudent woman, becomes no wiser than other folks. Here is a friend of mine, who shall be nameless, really seems so sadly at a loss how to throw away his money fast enough, that I mean to have a collection next Sunday, and catch a little of the golden shower for ourselves. There, Maurice lad, do tell your Bampfylde Moore Carew to have done, or we shall have half the village round us in five minutes.'

Abner accordingly pulled up, and dismounted, pointing out, with great exultation, the manifold perfections of the pony in technical language, which, as well as divers other phrases favoured among his race and guild, the reader will kindly accept in the form of a translation. The burden of the whole was, that never had been, and never would be seen such a pony, for speed, strength, and temper ; a young lady might drive him—a child might ride him.'

'Do you hear *that*, Walter ?' said the rector. 'Will you try if it be true ?'

'It is all stuff about children,' was Walter's reply ; 'but I should like to try if he is fit for a gentleman to ride.'

'Should you ? then up with you this minute. No, Lady Adelaide, you must let him try. If you have not yet learnt to see him risk his life and limbs, it is high time you began.'



.Right gladly did Walter obey, and right proud did he feel and look, as, with Abner running by his side, he cantered all round the churchyard and half way down the village, and came triumphantly back, his cheeks glowing with pleasure and exercise. The gipsy was quite right, there was not such a pony in the whole world, he was sure of that; it was a beauty, and so gentle!—in short, it seemed as if he could not make up his mind to dismount again, and very handsome he looked in the saddle, as everybody remarked, but his mother, who was admiring him in her heart more than any of them. Randolph gave one glance at the glistening eye and brightening smile that betrayed her maternal pride, and announced to Abner that the bargain was closed. The whole party then adjourned into the yard of the rectory, Walter sticking to the back of the pony till the last minute, and Lady Adelaide following because she had no choice. While the children were patting and fondling the quiet creature, and stuffing it with as many carrots as they could beg or steal from Colly's kitchen, Abner began to tell Randolph that he had not forgotten his other commission, though he had thought it right to finish the most important first. Yes, he had found that saucy one, he had, though not without more trouble than she was worth; and he had good hopes she would not play those pranks of hers again in a hurry, seeing as how she had got such a precious soaking the night after the gentleman saw her, she was all crippled with rheumatic fever;—yes, my lady, that lass they called Ally, though she might be anything for that matter, for she was just a heathen, never christened, nor seen the inside of the church walls; now he (Abner) always made a point of a clean shave on Sundays, and a sermon too, sometimes—when them horses weighed heavy on his spirits; for there's ups and downs in horse-flesh you know, my lady, as well as in everything else: but that lot knew nothing of what was respectable and decent—how should they? Yes, the girl was badly all over, and no one to care for her, and when she heard what the gentleman had said, and saw what he had sent her, she began to cry. Queer thing to do when she had just got five shillings; the first time Abner had ever known any one to cry because they had got money; when one hadn't, it was quite another thing, and not much good even then. The poor wench seemed so bad, he took her to the hospital in Lilford, which was the next town, and when he had done all he could to relieve her sufferings (which it was evident he had, even in his unsentimental style of narrative), 'I then telled her my mind, that if she had tasted the leather a little sooner, her bones might not have ached quite so much now, but that I thought it was too late to begin just then; so she had best try and take his honour's advice, and mend and be honest without it. And then she cried again, and begged me to tell the gentleman,

'she had known he was so good she never would have robbed him, ever! Not but what she would all the same, sir—but I just tell ou what she said.'

'Did she rob me? I missed nothing,' said Randolph, instinctively feeling his pockets.

'Well, sir, it weren't much, after all; but anyhow, here it all is,' taking a small parcel out of his hat. 'She says she took the handkercher out first, while you was busy over the fire, and then the ther dropped from it, and she kept it for pure mischief; and she hopes you will forgive her, as she kept them as clean as she could, in case of making anything by 'em—leastways by the handkercher. Yes, sir, they're both together there, if you'll please to open it.'

Randolph did as he was requested, and bounded as if he had been hot. His eyes turned on Lady Adelaide with a look of consternation that struck her with terror, and she could hardly find voice to ask what was the matter, when the letter she ought to have had a fortnight ago was silently put into her hand. She held it without power to move, volition and understanding seemed paralysed. Dr. Home sprang forwards, drew her arm in his, led her to the parlour, and made her sit down in his own arm-chair. He then drew back, and with Randolph by his side, stood anxiously watching what the effect might be of that communication, so wearily bided for.

The heart of Maurice Randolph, tender as a woman's when in contact with suffering, swelled grievously within him now. He durst not speak, even to exculpate the unwitting carelessness that had made him forget till this moment the very existence of the letter intrusted to him to deliver; he could only watch in silence her tremulous efforts to recover composure, and break the seal beneath which lay her destiny. The detention of the letter seemed to be forgotten in the excitement of its arrival; she scarcely noticed that she was observed; the whole world was for her in the pages of Miss Conway's delicate note-paper, and the business-like enclosure of Henry Lyndon. Her cousin's was read first, rapidly and nervously, her breathing growing quicker as the cold insulting heartlessness revealed itself more and more. When it was finished, she looked up at Dr. Home, with a bitter smile.

'You will like to see how kindly my relations feel towards me, sir; that lady was as a sister to me once. Nay, let Mr. Randolph read with you; he is an old friend of hers.'

Dr. Home looked at Randolph and Randolph at him, gravely and uneasily, but neither spoke. Anxiety to know the result made them readily avail themselves of the permission to read the letter, while Lady Adelaide took up Henry's with the listless despondency of one who had nothing more to hope or dread. Its effect was elec-

trical—almost maddening. With a half-stifled shriek she started up from her seat. ‘When did this arrive?’

The agony of the tone cut Randolph to the heart; he could not answer: the old rector attempted to explain and apologize for him, but she seemed incapable of listening. She only knew that her brother *had* relented—*had* given her an opening—had promised to do all he could if he heard in time—and if it had been only given her it would have been in time, and now it was too late;—and overstrained as her spirits and nerves had been by anxious days and sleepless nights, it was more than they could bear. Strong feelings habitually suppressed become proportionately vehement when once the restraint is broken; and her agitation was such as seriously to alarm them both. In vain she struggled for composure; she had overtasked her strength, and it was unequal to this sudden demand; nor was it till nature was thoroughly exhausted, that the bursts of hysterical emotion ceased—leaving her too worn out to do anything but lie down, as Dr. Home desired her, on his old horsehair sofa, while he went in quest of some wine and water.

‘Just keep an eye on her, Maurice,’ said he, as if he had been leaving a baby in his charge. ‘I’ll be back in a minute,’ and away he hurried, leaving them alone.

Then Randolph felt her eyes on his face, and he covered his own with his hands. The sight of his distress recalled her innate courtesy, and she faintly begged he would not think any more about it; she was ashamed of having twice shown such weakness, but she hoped he would forgive it. He came and stood by her side, looking remorsefully down on her pale face.

‘I have not dared to name forgiveness,’ he began slowly, ‘but if *you* can forgive——’

‘No,’ she said; ‘I can only forgive an intentional injury, and that I need never fear from you.’

He caught her hand in both his, sank on his knees, and pressed it to his lips; a flood of passionate emotion pouring through heart and brain, before which all else was swept away. A few broken sentences, he scarcely knew what, were all that could be heard; but Lady Adelaide felt, and trembled in every fibre to feel, the burning kisses, the hot tears on her hand, which she was too exhausted to withdraw. Her silence recalled his recollection; he looked up in sudden dread of a glance of scorn, and saw that her eyes were closed, and her lips as white as her face. ‘What a selfish, unfeeling brute I am!’ was all the consolation he could think of, as he hastened to apply such restoratives as were within reach—feeling terribly guilty when Dr. Home returned with refreshments, and found her looking worse than when he left. Her resolution, however, came to their aid; she was only too ready to declare herself

better, and take more blame on her weakness than they were willing to bestow. She even listened, dejectedly enough, but without impatience, while the kind old man suggested grounds for still hoping on, in spite of appearances; that it might not be too late; that Henry Lyndon might be able to rectify the error; that it was, at worst, but a hope deferred, which might be all the while growing into a tree of life, against the time when it was good for her. All true enough, but in the meanwhile, as Randolph could read in her look, how sick it made the heart that waited!—too sick, at last, even for friendship and sympathy; and the rector was obliged to own, the only kindness left for him to show, was to give her his arm home, and reserve advice and consolation till she was more able to bear them.

As they were walking slowly together, Sophy and Walter being in advance, he suddenly broke silence to observe, ‘I had no idea you were so unforgiving, my dear; you expect others to forgive *you*, and yet you let that poor fellow Maurice watch and wait, as I saw him doing, in hopes of getting one kind look or word to show you bore no malice; and never so much as shook hands with him when you came away. Let me take him one good-natured word back, or I don’t know what he will do, he looked so unlike himself.’

She blushed deeply, and after a short pause replied, ‘Tell him, then, from me, that those who commit error and cause sorrow themselves, should be the most lenient in their judgment of others.’

## CHAPTER X.

But even now, in calm review  
Of all I lost and all I won,  
I cannot call you wholly true,  
Nor wholly just what you have done.

MONCKTON MILNES.

THE happiest homes are the least easy to describe; as some of the sweetest faces are the most difficult to draw. Where passion and care have made deep their furrows, where there are strong lines here, and dark shadows there, the artist can seize and portray them; but the open, bright face of constant sunshine, is as hard to copy as sunshine itself. If you catch one ray, you miss the next; you want to throw the image of perpetual change on a changeless surface, and the result is disappointment, and naturally so. And in like manner it has been much easier to sketch the domestic grievances and differences of Cannymoor, than it is to set before the reader’s eye the London home of Henry Lyndon, where none ever seemed to find place.

'God made the country, and man made the town,' saith the poet, not unwisely ; but it happens, as often as not, that God is to be found in man's temple, and his enemies in his own. Peace, despite all that has been said and written to the contrary, will leave the quiet meadows, the misty hills, the free wild upland—to fold her white wings under the darkness of a metropolitan sky ; to smile upon dull streets, and house tops, and smoke, and the rumble of wheels, and the medley of noises, preventing any individual noise from being remarkable, that make up the physiology of the London landscape.

Man made the town ; yes—but God made the hearts that beat within its walls ; and there have been thoughts as lofty, purposes as noble, deeds as romantically heroic, wrought out in the smoke and the din, as ever were nursed on mountain or in valley, in the full revelation of the glory of nature. Therefore, with respect not so far removed from that with which we view the beauty of rock and woodland, look we on the unsightly, begrimed, demon-like chimney—from whose jaws come the honest life of thousands, round which they gather the daily bread that rewards labour, and linked where-with is a chain of humble efforts, unknown sacrifices, unaware heroisms, that are the poetry of the working-day world—real and sublime as any on earth.

All this, the reader will perceive, is to herald the announcement that there was nothing picturesque, nothing to charm a lover of nature in Henry Lyndon's home. And yet, never did he set his face in that direction without a sense of exhilaration, more refreshing than the sweetest breath of thyme and heather that ever blew over a mountain side. The refreshment that awaited him there, was of a kind that makes labour light, soothes ruffled spirits, rests wearied nerves, and gives strength, life, and gladness, to carry the workman through the next day.

He had been a prudent, as well as an industrious man ; he made no attempts at marriage till he had realized enough to insure his wife comfort and elegance ; and he selected that wife for those qualities without which there may be a great deal of elegance, but very little comfort. Out of a large family, shrewd lawyer that he was, he picked out the one who could be least spared ; the one whom he had observed to be the centre of everybody's happiness, from a certain sweetness of temper and absence of selfishness, making it as natural to her to think of others as it generally is to take care of oneself ; and whether he fully appreciated or not, at the time, the principle which was the mainspring of this amiability, the event justified his discernment, and every day's experience confirmed its value.

Brought up in a home of love, confidence, and good management

—among a fabulous number of brothers and sisters, under the constant care of tender and religious parents—guarded from every evil, and strengthened in every juvenile temptation by their sympathy, watchfulness, and prayers—the mind of Emma Vivian had grown up in a healthy, vigorous simplicity; prepared to encounter evil by thinking none, to fight her way through life by disarming her adversaries, and to endure the daily rubs on the gloss of young romance, by having her dearest enthusiasms linked with realities that neither time nor change could deprive of their power. It was her nature to believe, love, and trust; she could not help it; she had lived among those who did so, and was accustomed to nothing else; nor could any one who once looked in her fair open face—neither strikingly beautiful, nor remarkably clever, but attractive and sensible enough to do without, have wished for a moment that she should.

She was waiting now, this gusty, dusty March afternoon, for her husband's ring; a small, clear fire making the pretty drawing-room bright, and a baby on her knee, glorious in the needlework of admiring young aunts, of whom there was always a light brigade hovering within reach, and who led it the life of a shuttlecock amongst them. The ladylike neatness and good taste of her dress were only equalled by the arrangement of her home, where care and vigilance were constantly wrestling with London smoke, to keep chintz bright, and carpets fresh; and where everything showed it was meant for use, and yet too good to be used unfairly. A few hot-house flowers in a delicate glass, a few good water-colour drawings on the walls, the last interesting publication on the table, were among the luxuries which Henry indulged himself and her; and all with the same stamp of taste for what is lovely and of good report. In time the young mistress might have to endure seeing little hands and feet disturb all her cherished order and propriety; but at present she had it all her own way, and the best of babies was only one ornamental piece of furniture the more.

She had been looking forward all day to her favourite treat of being read to by Henry in the evening; and had religiously abstained from going on with the book he had begun, in the hope, but too often disappointed, that he might not be too busy, or too tired, to enjoy the recreation that pleased him best. He arrived at last, looking, as he seldom did in her presence, vexed beyond power of concealment; and even while paying homage due to his little daughter, who had no idea of business interfering with her claims, could not refrain from giving vent to the dissatisfaction rampant within him. Considering that he had only just heard, what the reader already knows, of the result of his exertions as mediator, this state of mind may not be deemed altogether unreasonable; and

it was not long before the absolute necessity of relief made him briefly explain to his wife the circumstances of the case.

‘Not hearing from Lady Adelaide, or receiving any intelligence from Lord Delaunay, I called at last at his house, and found he was gone abroad, leaving a cool note for me, requesting any further communications might be made through Mr. Stevenson, his solicitor. Knowing pretty well what this meant, I sent it off to Lady Adelaide, telling her in plain English I had done all I could for her; but as she, of course, knew her own affairs best, I had only to regret her decision and bow to it. Back comes her answer; she had only just received the packet I sent her a fortnight ago, which some officious friend had fetched from the post, and forgotten to deliver; had his pocket picked by a gipsy, and had only just got it back. I wish people would mind their own affairs, and leave other people’s letters alone. I am sure I don’t know what is to be done next, and what is more, I don’t care.’

That this was not meant in earnest, his gentle wife knew as well as he did himself; but while she was considering what consolatory remark would ruffle him least, a card was brought to Henry, with the announcement that the gentleman wished to see him on very particular business. With another growl at the unreasonable hours people would choose for arranging their affairs, he ordered his visitor to be shown into the dining-room, promising himself and Emma that he would soon settle *his* matters, whatever they might be.

Emma waited long and patiently, expecting every minute to hear the hall-door close; but it was just dinner-time, the hum of voices seemed no nearer than when they first began, and with all the emotion of a young housekeeper, she recollected that her husband’s favourite dish would infallibly be spoiled if kept waiting. Just in time for her reputation, however, the dining-room door opened, and the next minute Henry appeared, followed by a tall, sunburnt stranger, with a dark moustache, whom he introduced as Mr. Randolph, just arrived from Cannymoor to share their family dinner.

However disappointing this arrangement might be, she was too good a wife to let it appear; and it was not long before she felt disposed to welcome the visitor for his own sake. He was so pleasant and agreeable, and took such notice of the baby—who appeared to receive his advances with as much complacency as if she were one of the ladies of Cannymoor—it was impossible to feel sorry he was come. He repudiated with indignation the suggestion of his host—himself an intense believer in his baby, but professing free-thinking opinions before company—that no man could understand the infant race, or know one from another. In contradiction of this, the visitor narrated his own exploit in restoring a baby to

health ; a story deeply interesting to Emma, who had some private notions of her own about homœopathy, which not even Henry's sarcasms could eradicate. She was eager to hear more about Cannymoor and the people, of whom Henry never would tell her half she wished to know ; and she was plying Randolph with questions he might have found it difficult to answer satisfactorily, when her husband quietly changed the subject. He had his reasons, perhaps, for not wishing her to know too much of that locality ; and during the dinner there were so many interesting topics to discuss of political news, travels, and literature, that it was not till the dessert was on the table, and the three were alone, that the subject was renewed—this time by himself.

‘You have no objection, Mr. Randolph, to mentioning before my wife what has brought you to town ?’

‘I have one great objection,’ said he ; ‘and that is, that it must lower me in her opinion ; but in hopes of her advice, I will submit to the penalty I deserve.’

‘Read that, then, Emma,’ said her husband, throwing a note to her across the table.

Emma read with some curiosity :—

‘CANNYMOOR RECTORY, *March, 18—*

‘DEAR LYNDON,—The bearer of this, my friend, Mr. Maurice Randolph, has had the misfortune to do a very careless thing, which, if it injured himself might not signify, but as it affects a friend of yours and mine, becomes a serious matter. I have recommended his applying to you for counsel how to undo the mischief he has done, and I am much deceived in my opinion of you, if you scruple to make all the use of him you can.

‘Yours sincerely,

A. HOME.’

A light began to dawn on Mrs. Henry Lyndon as she finished this original letter of recommendation. She glanced half-inquiringly at her husband, and his look confirmed the rising conjecture. Randolph answered the unspoken question.

‘I see you understand the allusion, Mrs. Lyndon ; you are acquainted with some particulars of the case, but you should hear more before you judge.’

And he described the whole scene, and how he had been at the time so absorbed in the attention required by the sick wanderer, as never to remember the letter he had thrust into his pocket ; no wonder, that after it had been abstracted, it should escape his recollection altogether. He would have given half he possessed sooner than that such a thing should have occurred ; he had not rested a moment since its discovery, and he should not rest, he felt



assured, till he had done something to make amends. His tone was so thoroughly in earnest, all anger was disarmed at once. Emma, interested in the whole story, and in all she had been hearing of Lady Adelaide, begged for more particulars. What was her history, and the reason of her family's resentment? How was it that no friends or relations of her own had come forward to take her part—what had she done?

'Ah!' said Henry, filling his glass, and pushing the decanter to his guest; 'that is a long story, and a puzzling one. I myself only know it in part, and I rather imagine we must look to Mr. Randolph to explain the rest. Our good friend Dr. Home exhorts me to make you useful; believe me, I mean to take his advice; and the mischief you have done us may, after all, be more than repaired if, by the additional light you can throw on the past, you enable me to get the clue I have been hunting for to no purpose.'

'If there is anything in which my experience can be of service,' said Randolph, with a sigh, 'you have a right to command it to the utmost; but I doubt it.'

'Allow me to ask, then, are you not acquainted with Lady Delaunay?'

'Not personally; I was private secretary to her uncle, General Conway, some years ago.'

'And was Miss Conway, Lady Delaunay's niece, residing with him at that time?'

'She was.'

'Did you ever see Lady Adelaide there?'

'Yes.'

'Were you there at the time of her marriage?'

'No.'

The answers were given so abruptly, and the speaker's colour deepened so much, it caught Emma's attention. She looked quickly at her husband, and he at her.

'I think you said, Mr. Randolph,' resumed Henry, after a pause, 'that Lady Adelaide showed you those letters?'

'She did me that honour. I believe it was principally because in her agitation she overlooked everything but the bitter disappointment. It was, indeed, seeing how very different was the tone of Lord Delaunay's two messages, that decided Dr. Home and myself on applying to you for an explanation.'

'Miss Conway's note, then, was not remarkably affectionate?'

'It was so cold and heartless, I could hardly believe it to be her writing; when I saw them last together, they were intimate and attached friends.'

'And can you in any way account for this intimacy and attachment being broken off?'

‘No—the estrangement must have begun since I left the general’s house.’

‘Do not you think it would be worth while to find out?’

Randolph looked up inquiringly.

‘You see,’ said Henry, smiling, ‘I am taking it for granted that you are ready and anxious to give us your assistance in the matter that sits very near the hearts of some of us. At the same time, it is not to be expected you should feel as we do, who cannot forget that Lady Adelaide’s entrance into our family cost her all her own. How they can have persuaded themselves to be so harsh with such a woman, puzzles me, or would, did I not suspect now a little under-hand dealing that is quite enough to account for it. Lord Delaunay would evidently be glad of a reconciliation, but has not resolution enough to carry it out against the will of the others; and Miss Conway shows by her manner it shall not be if she can help it. What Lady Delaunay herself feels on the subject, one can only conjecture by the result, as she is unapproachable. I cannot help suspecting that circumstances may have been represented to her in some dexterously false light, so as to warp her better judgment, and persuade her that family honour, or family pride, or whatever they please to call it, requires she should treat with persevering unkindness one of the noblest creatures this world ever saw.’

‘Is her daughter then so very charming?’ asked Emma, eagerly.

‘She is very beautiful,’ was Randolph’s slow, guarded answer.

‘Ah!’ said Henry, rising to stir the fire; ‘but do you remember what she used to be?’

He bowed silently.

‘That bright, earnest, animated face, full of its high romantic passion, that looked as if it had never known a care or a sorrow that was not of the imagination—who could ever forget that? So she was when I saw her first. When I met her at Southampton, on her return from India, she did not look exactly the same, Emma.’

‘Poor thing!’ said Emma, heartily; ‘I wish there was anything I could do for her.’

‘I wished that for a long while,’ said Henry, discontentedly, ‘and have done what I could. I have argued the point with their lawyers; I would have tried my skill on some other branches of the family, to see if their intercession would be of more service; but I found that there was quite enough discord among them to make that a dangerous experiment. Lady Adelaide herself warned me against the attempt. This time I had hopes through her brother, and now—’

‘I have defeated them,’ interrupted Randolph; ‘and you think the least I can do is to try my powers in return. Well, if it must be, I am bound not to refuse; but it is a strange service for me to undertake, of all people. If you only knew—’

He paused, as if he could not go on ; rose from his chair, and went to the fire, without seeming the least aware of what he was doing ; plucked at and twisted his long moustache with desperate energy—faced round again, and looked first at one, then at the other, with a yearning wistfulness that seemed to crave sympathy and to long to confide. Their eyes watched him with friendly anxiety ; Emma's were bright with interest, for she now began to understand. After a pause of some minutes, she said with a smile and a blush, 'Perhaps, Mr. Randolph, you could talk more freely, if I were to leave you together ?'

'Mrs. Lyndon, on the contrary, it is the kindness and indulgence of your face that could alone give me courage to speak at all.'

'Then will you trust us as friends, if I stay ?'

'May I ?' he said with eagerness ; and then pausing with an oppressed sigh, as if the comfort of sympathy was almost too great to expect. 'If I dared trouble you—if I thought it would not be presuming too much—I feel as if you were indeed old friends, and what you have asked of me just now, shows me how necessary it is you should know something more of my past existence : then you can judge for yourselves how far my help is likely to be of value.'

Their cordial expressions of interest encouraged his confidence, and his last scruple melted before Emma's smile.

'Yes, I feel that you are friends,' he began abruptly. 'I have lived long enough, and seen variety enough, to be tolerably acute in that matter. I will open my mind to you as at a confessional.'

'I was brought up in the expectation of being my uncle Randolph's heir ; my father's name was Gray, and by that name I was known to General Conway. My grandfather was his brother officer, and he always retained a friendly feeling towards our family. I lost my uncle's favour by holding opposite political opinions to his own ; he was a hot reformer, and I as hot on the other side ; and it ended in his declaring I should never see a sixpence of his money, unless I adopted his views.'

'A shrewd way of arguing,' said Henry. 'Nothing more convincing than the screw.'

'But it did not influence you, Mr. Randolph, I am sure !' cried Emma.

'Well, Mrs. Lyndon, at that age one is not so easily bought. One is apt to believe character, acquirements, and earnestness require no gilding to make their way : later in life we see the mistake : I have been in places where the brightest gold that bears our good Queen's image would not carry on the war as well as a parcel of coarse silver coins, or ragged notes ; and it is often much the same in society.'

Emma looked serious. 'Is that really the case ? I have never mixed much in society, but I always understood right-minded,

sincere people were sure to be the most respected in the end. Don't you think so, Henry ?

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders. '*C'est selon ;*' he said, 'as Mr. Randolph observes, some people prefer small change, however dirty, because they have never professed anything higher ; so if you will have dealings with them, you must e'en fill your pockets with infinitesimal fractions of a penny sterling, and keep your sovereigns till they are likely to be valued. Our friend here, you see, had only his fire-new political sincerity to offer his uncle, fresh and clean from the mint—and it would not pass.'

'That is all very well,' said Emma, 'and you know you can soon puzzle me with that kind of argument ; but you cannot persuade me that anybody is ever the better off for not doing what he knows to be right.'

'That depends on what people mean by "better off,"' returned Henry.

'Oh Harry ! can there be any question about it ?'

'A great many, my dear. For instance, I have heard some people say we should be better off without law ; and I protest against the assertion emphatically.'

Emma turned good-humouredly to Randolph : 'That is how I am silenced, you see. I shall gain nothing by attempting to argue ; and I suspect my reasoning will be better supported by your story than by any wise things I could say. Pray go on. You quarrelled with your uncle, then ?'

'There must be two parties, it is said, to make a quarrel,' returned Randolph, 'and I revered him too much to be one of them. However, he was offended by my resistance, and I was thrown on my own resources rather suddenly. I will not trouble you with the account of my various attempts to make a gentlemanly livelihood ; it is only the story of hundreds every day, and did me a great deal of good, by teaching me self-reliance and endurance. I applied at last to General Conway, and his kindness I must ever remember with gratitude. He made me his private secretary, with a liberal salary ; and always treated me as a gentleman and a friend. My duties were light, and I had a library, and workshop, and laboratory, and what not, at my disposal — companions I have often looked back to with regret. The general's family circle only consisted of two ladies, relations of his own ; one an elderly widowed cousin, and the other his great-niece, Miss Conway, whom Mr. Lyndon has seen. She was the actual mistress of the house while I was there. She treated me coldly at first, I remember, but afterwards with a friendly cordiality that made everything pleasant enough. At her own request I gave her lessons in Latin and philosophy, and so forth ; the general only cared for the society of old

officers, and good whist-players, and used to send us "youngsters," as he called us, riding and walking, to be out of the way. Mrs. Marsden, his cousin, was a kind-hearted old lady—sufficiently attached to him to share his tastes, as a matter of course : and when the board of green cloth, as it constantly did, claimed her services, the care of entertaining any younger guests that might be invited partly devolved on me. There came one visitor at last——'

Something seemed to choke his voice; he began on a different tack.

'At that time parties ran very high ; the ministry were unpopular, a general election was expected, and the leaders on both sides were collecting their forces, strengthening their ranks, and completely absorbed in preparation for the coming struggle. The house of Lady Delaunay was one of the strongholds ; her son, the young Earl, was finishing his education, preparatory to assuming the lead in his party, which he was then expected to do—as it would appear, with very little foundation—and meanwhile she was an able regent. All the leading men were to be found at her house ; her literary taste drew the wit and authors to her elegant and brilliant *soirées* ; and there is no doubt she at that time possessed political interest enough to arm her with no small amount of power. The consequence of all this, however, was, that Lady Delaunay, whom everybody admired and respected, even when they differed from her in opinion, had very little leisure to bestow on her daughter, then hardly sixteen ; and it was at this period she began to be a constant visitor at General Conway's. Sometimes she was with us for weeks at a time, shared in the lessons I gave her cousin, and into whatever she undertook, whether study or recreation, infused a life and grace which were utterly wanting till then. If the house had been pleasant before, what do you suppose it became now ? You have described her as you saw her, Mr. Lyndon ; but were *I* to attempt to describe—if I durst give the reins to memory, and live that dream over again——'

He shaded his brow with his hand, and seemed unable to proceed. Emma, whose tender-heartedness was glistening in her eyes, laid a soothing touch on his arm. 'A dream of anything lovely and good, who would ever wish to forget ?'

'Where it is *only* a dream,' remarked Henry, passing the wine to his guest, 'the sooner it is forgotten the better ; but where time and trials have tested the reality, and shown its value, the question assumes a different aspect altogether. Yes,' for Maurice looked keenly round ; 'without attempting to prove her to be more faultless or prudent than any other woman—especially in such peculiar circumstances—I know enough to warrant my defending her against much that has been said ; and which you, perhaps, like many others, have believed too quickly.'

‘Convince me that I have,’ said Maurice, with emotion, ‘and there is no service I would not render you in return. But you have not heard me out, and perhaps anticipate my story too hastily. What the effect of this intercourse was upon me, it were affectation to pretend to deny; you have surmised it already. Thrown constantly together—seeing her, as I did, at all hours, and under all circumstances—admitted, during the hours of study, to an insight into the generous thoughts of her young, fresh mind, where the very faults of her education and temperament took an engaging form—looking round me in vain for any creature that could be her equal, and finding every comparison only raise her higher still—I gave up my soul to the influence; I loved her, worshipped her—how madly, I never knew till too late. It came on me by degrees, and when I woke to the conviction, it had become my master, my life of life. And yet—spare me the thought on your lips, Mrs. Lyndon—honour bound me not to avail myself of my position; I could only be her friend, and I persuaded myself—fool that I was! that with such a friendship I could be satisfied; that to be near her, to see her, to share her confidence, and to spend my life in her service, would be happiness enough, without desiring what I might not attempt to win. Love was never named between us, but friendship often; and ours was to be what earth had never seen before, in its self-devotion, its constancy, its generous truth. *Ay de mi!* we were no wiser than children, and those who threw us together have not even that excuse. They had no right to tempt a man as they tempted me: it was a terrible moment when I made the discovery, that there was no safety left me but in flight, and that without looking behind me; but my mind was soon made up—go I must, and go I would.’

‘Oh, you acted nobly!’ said Emma, with a sigh of relief.

‘I made my arrangements privately, and then went to the general to announce my intention. He seemed surprised and hurt, but was all kindness, urged me to think twice, offered to increase my salary, to allow me more relaxation, anything reasonable, if I would only name it; but to leave him in this hasty manner without a cause assigned, he said, was neither worthy of himself nor me. So as he would have it, I told him bluntly enough, I believe, that his niece was too charming, and that though a poor secretary, as I was, I knew my own position too correctly to aspire, yet I could not trust myself, and would not remain an hour longer than I could possibly help. He shook me by the hand, with the tears in his eyes—God bless his memory! he is under the sod, which covers many a wiser, and perhaps more useful a head, but few kinder hearts. He seemed unable to comprehend the immediate urgency of the case, desired me to sit down, and wait, while he considered it; and left me in his study while, as it appeared, he

went in quest of Miss Conway. "Here, Gray," said he, as he brought her in, "here is one who can advise you the best; tell her what you have just told me, and let her decide whether you should go or stay." And he left us together.'

Henry Lyndon leaned forward, and became keenly attentive.

'What the general meant by this proceeding, I could not conceive; however, as he left me no choice, I told Miss Conway the truth. Not even his encouraging manner could give me hope, but there was some faint consolation in feeling, that, when I was far away, *she* might some day know her friend was not wholly unworthy of her esteem. Whatever her uncle had led Miss Conway to expect, it certainly was not this; for though I hardly heeded it at the time, I never saw a countenance change so suddenly. I suppose she saw the madness of it, as I did myself, for she was evidently more disturbed than she cared to show: however, on my pressing for her approval of my determination, she held out her hand with an air of great kindness, telling me she was quite sure it was the only thing left for me to do, and she hoped for my own sake I had not thought of it too late.

'That afternoon was one of the most beautiful in June, and June never comes back without recalling, too vividly for my peace, every incident of those last hours. I have lived them over again so many times, that you must forgive any prolixity of detail into which I may be betrayed; the sum total of the whole tends but to prove myself a fool, so I have little cause to make more words about it than necessary. At any rate, that afternoon, as I was wandering about the shrubbery, endeavouring to cool down my excited brain—it wanted cooling badly enough, in all conscience—I suddenly came upon the two cousins in eager conversation, which broke off abruptly on my appearance. Miss Conway rose from the bench where they were seated, and met me with a strange smile whose meaning I could not fathom, saying, "You are just in time, Mr. Gray; I leave you to hear my cousin's opinion of your self-sacrifice from her own lips."

'I turned from her, as she swept past, to look in that face which had been to me as an angel's. That she should have been informed why I was going, was an unnecessary indiscretion I was quite unprepared for; but the secret once betrayed, all that was left for me was to preserve my honour, and neither by word nor look disturb the peace dearer to me than my own. If ever there was an honest, straightforward purpose in a man's heart, it was mine at that moment. To take leave of her as a friend, to receive her approbation, to tell her that, however far asunder, my prayers, my thoughts, my life-blood, would ever be hers—was all I could hope, or dare to do, and more than I had ventured to expect. But when

I looked at her, I was dumb. Scorn, resentment, and wounded pride, had transformed those brilliant features into the face of a young Medusa; and Medusa-like, it seemed to turn me to stone. What passed, I cannot repeat to you; in the countless times that that scene has returned to haunt and madden me, I never could recall her exact words—perhaps I did not hear them all—but the purport I understood too well. The eyes flashing through angry tears, the flushed cheek, the laugh, by far the worst of all, were interpreters there was no mistaking. She regretted that I thought it necessary to leave on her account; regretted that she had been, however unconsciously, the means of causing me any inconvenience; if I had known her more intimately, and understood her position a little better, I should have been spared a great deal of trouble and anxiety. This was all said with comparative composure, but when I recovered myself sufficiently to begin some apology or explanation—I hardly know what, for I was half mad—I only remember imploring her to listen to me, and in vain—her indignation burst forth; she flung her hand from mine as I tried to detain her, saying she could endure everything from me but the insult of a profession of regard. After what had passed, I might forget the distance between us, but *she* could—never!

‘And so we parted: and the distance of which she spoke so haughtily, became from that moment an immeasurable thing. I never saw her again till I met her at the Manor-house at Cannymoor.’

‘Did you know of her marriage?’ asked Henry, after a short silence.

‘I saw it in an old newspaper, some time after it had taken place; I was then abroad. After leaving the general—which I did that same evening, with briefer apology than his goodness deserved (for which I have often reproached myself since)—I tried to get employment, but before I succeeded, my uncle fell ill, and sent for me; but whether he thought, from expressions let fall in the bitterness of my soul, that my views about the aristocracy were considerably modified, or whether the old kindness was too strong within him at the last, we became reconciled; he died soon after, leaving me his name, and wealth sufficient to gratify every wish. My first was to put the sea between me and England; and the restlessness growing by what it fed on, I became a wanderer from that day, seeking rest and finding none; for no change of scene or condition can make me forget. I have thrown myself into danger, tracked it into its dens and strongholds, held my life in my hand, as it were, for months together; but no excitement, no exertion, no reason, no philosophy, has been able to efface that image, and drown the echo of that last bitter laugh.



‘I heard at last, accidentally, from some officers who had known them in India, that her husband was dead, and she was living in England. A passionate desire to see her again, even as an enemy, overcame every other consideration. I set off homewards, traced her to Cannymoor, and finding my old tutor, Dr. Home, settled there, availed myself of the opportunity of becoming his guest.’

‘And why did you wish so much to see her again?’ asked Emma, gently.

‘I dare not tell you, Mrs. Lyndon.’

‘Oh, you may indeed; I believe I know already. You felt how noble and generous it would be, since you were now so much better off than herself, to come back as if nothing had passed, and return her unkindness—which was very great, I must own—by being a true and generous friend in her adversity. Was it not so, Mr. Randolph?’

‘No,’ he said, ‘I dare not say it was. You judge of others by your own gentle nature; *you* would have felt so, I know; but I am a man of sinful passions, and nothing more. Morbid and overstrained as it may appear to you, whenever I recalled her treatment of me, my blood boiled to resent the insult, and its memory was burning on my lips when I spoke to her once more. I dealt with her too harshly—I spoke too bitterly—and she who had treated me as beneath her notice, I felt to be quailing before mine.’

‘Poor thing!’ said Emma, again, still more compassionately than before.

‘Ay,’ added Henry, drily, ‘she did not exactly want an extra fardel in her heap, I imagine. There is no denying, however, your indignation was natural at such treatment; it was cruel, heartless, and utterly unworthy of her. Faults of imprudence are natural at that age; but this was so unlike herself altogether, that I am more than ever convinced there is something unexplained. Miss Conway’s behaviour strikes me as peculiarly suspicious and questionable. Your having, whether voluntarily or not, admitted her into your confidence, made it at least incumbent upon her to hold her tongue; and I should uncommonly like to have her upon oath, and cross-examine her as to what she did really say, and why she said it. One thing, however, seems pretty clear, that it would be expecting too much of human nature to hope you can take an interest in Lady Adelaide’s subsequent fortunes or misfortunes, or share our anxiety to restore her peace of mind.’

‘Before I answer that,’ said Randolph, ‘I have a request to make. May I ask you to show me as much frankness as I have shown you, and tell me all you are at liberty to tell of her marriage and her married life. Tell me something of that—that man—I

name him with respect—whose early fate was cheaply purchased by being loved in life as he must have been. Was he indeed so superior, as to make up to that haughty spirit for all she lost ?

‘As to that,’ said Henry, ‘to speak frankly, as you request, and have a right to claim—he was a fine, handsome fellow, indulged from his cradle, heedless, good-natured, easily led where pleasure was concerned, a brave officer, as far as danger went, but with little or no head. His education had been very insufficient, and his abilities were nothing remarkable ; but there was a charm about him, nevertheless, that is difficult to describe ; something so winning in his eager, impetuous ways, so affectionate, so warm-hearted, with all his imprudence, that he generally carried his point against us all. What was his first attraction in her eyes, I cannot pretend to say ; but he was passionately devoted to her, and not having your honourable scruples to silence him, took care she should know it so distinctly, there could be no chance of mistake. They met first at some archery meeting, or *fête* of some kind, while Lady Adelaide was at General Conway’s, which must have been soon after your departure, and from that hour poor Walter’s fate was sealed. His father had placed him, most unwisely, in an expensive cavalry regiment, stationed in that neighbourhood ; he had formed friendships with some of the most fashionable men in it, much above him in rank and fortune, and they introduced him everywhere, and taught him how to spend money considerably faster than his father had any idea of. In fact, he was very much in debt, but I did not know that till afterwards. I was then fagging at the uphill part of my profession in town, and only saw him occasionally ; soon, however, his eagerness for a confidant brought him to me, and I heard of nothing but Lady Adelaide Chester. She had returned to her mother’s house, and nothing would do but I must go and see her ride in Hyde Park. There it was I saw her first, as I told you ; and surely never lighted on this orb—on horseback, at any rate—a more delightful vision—or one less adapted for poor Walter, as I did not scruple to tell him. It seemed to drive him mad, when I told him I saw no hope for him ; I thought he would have struck me. “No hope ?” he repeated ; “but if I did not hope, and feel certain of winning her, I should die !” I thought he *would* have died more than once, from brain fever, before it was all done.

‘He got leave of absence, took expensive lodgings in town, was constantly rushing from one scene of amusement to another, wherever there was a chance of meeting her, and thanks to the friends he had made, they met very often. It was her first season in London, and people were wild about her. I saw her

once in public with her mother, and if any one looked proud of another, Lady Delaunay was then of her daughter, and cared not who knew it. But I was much too busy and too unfashionable to know much of what was going on, and Walter had but little time to come near me. One evening, however, after a long interval, he rushed into my room, nearly beside himself. It was all over with him—his regiment was under orders for India in three weeks; and as fighting was expected to have begun before they arrived, he could not in honour exchange. It was done to get rid of him—he knew it for certain.

‘And so I believe it was. I never could understand the rights of the story, but it appeared that their attachment had been communicated to Lady Delaunay, and had been instantly prohibited; that her daughter’s remonstrances and resistance had only served to make her more determined, and that as the surest way of putting Walter out of Adelaide’s head, a little secret influence was set to work at the Horse Guards to get the gallant —th fairly out of reach. It did seem hard measure to an only son; at least, I thought so at the time; though, after all, it was only what in his profession he should have been prepared for; but to Walter it appeared such a piece of tyrannical cruelty as the Middle Ages could not parallel. He raged about my room like a lion; declared he would baffle the woman after all; if he lost everything for Adelaide’s sake, he had a right to expect the same from her; and away he went, deaf to all my persuasions and soothing. I wanted him to go home and take leave of his father and mother; and as I heard nothing more for a fortnight, was in hopes he had done so—little dreaming what he was about—till he came to intrust to my honour the secret that they were to be privately married at—— Church the next morning. The curate was his own particular friend, and had shown him how to get over difficulties, instead of making any; their banns had been put up without causing any discovery; he did not believe six people in the church heard the names; everything was arranged and agreed upon. Would I stand by him, and help him through it all?

‘Well, I was young myself, and I loved him, and he relied on me: right or wrong, I could not refuse. Indeed, if I had, I do not know what would have become of him; he was worked up to a pitch of ungovernable excitement that gave me considerable fears for his health; and if it alarmed me, what must have been its effect upon her, who looked upon him, as he did upon himself, as wilfully sacrificed by her friends on her account? I have never been able to judge her severely, even when I regretted her weakness most; for I knew Walter had not spared her then, nor did he ever afterwards. His love was idolatry, but he required its object to exist for him alone.

‘When I saw her come into the still church the morning of their marriage, agitated, pale, and dreading observation, with only a maid-servant as a companion, the selfishness of the whole proceeding struck me to the heart. I longed to prevent it—I said all I could, and pretty plainly; but I might as well have lectured to the pew-cushions. She only saw in him one sacrificed for her, and for whom the least she could do was to give up all in return; and it was expecting too much from human nature, perhaps, to ask him to relinquish, even for her own sake, the prize just within his grasp. But neither of them, I have reason to believe, ever thought me the less their friend for my frankness. The service began; the curate, who knew the risk he incurred, seemed nervously anxious to get it over; it was nearly finished, when a slight bustle near the door made me look round. The clergyman looked too, and faltered—no wonder—for there was Lady Delaunay.

‘Walter and Adelaide, lost to all but themselves, saw and heard nothing; to my surprise, the mother made no interruption. No doubt she had intended to forbid the ceremony, but finding it so nearly completed, she stood there, a witness to the most flagrant act of rebellion a parent can know. Never did I see a more imposing expression of suffering proudly suppressed. She is a small, slender woman, without her daughter’s grandeur of carriage and height; but her dignity seemed to raise her above us all. I could not take my eyes off her face, nor she hers from the kneeling form of her daughter. What relentless purpose she vowed during those moments I cannot say; my apprehensions deepened as I watched—the more that I felt what strong cause she had for resentment. The curate did not like it, but he was no coward, and his sympathy was all with the young people, and he went steadily through the service to the end. Then Adelaide rose, turned—saw her mother’s stern, sad face—and I was only just in time to catch her in my arms, for she dropped as if a shot had passed through her heart.

‘Not a shadow of tenderness was now on that mother’s features; no Roman ever steeled himself more resolutely. She came up to Walter in her stateliest manner, and without a glance at her daughter, told him her solicitor would communicate with him; and then left the church, before he could find a word in reply. We were some time bringing Adelaide to herself; the shock, at such a moment of agitation, had been very severe; indeed, she tells me she has never quite recovered its effects; any strong emotion is apt to bring on an attack of faintness even now. When she did regain consciousness, her agony of mind was terrible; I do not believe she had realized till then the step she was taking, nor the light in which her mother would view it; now she was in a fever to obtain her pardon; and bitterly lamented the weakness that had cost her her last oppor-

tunity. Walter's distress on her account made her at last control herself; we took her to the lodgings he had prepared; and I had enough to do, making arrangements for her to go with him to India. They had no more idea than two children how to set about things; she learned the quickest though, and that very soon. In due course came the lawyer's communication: ten thousand pounds had been left to Lady Adelaide by her father on her coming of age, or, at the pleasure of her mother, on her marriage. This, by Lady Delaunay's desire, would be paid to Mr. Walter Lyndon's account at once. All communications were to be made through the solicitor, as Lady Delaunay declined receiving any letters.

'This was no great fortune, but to Walter it seemed boundless wealth; and though I then found out how heavily he was embarrassed, I could not prevent his wasting money on himself and her, as if there was no possibility of its ever coming to an end. It was no use arguing the point; for he always maintained Lady Delaunay would be sure to come round, and leave Adelaide lots of money by and by. What else could she do with that fine jointure of hers, entirely at her own disposal? He would give her a reasonable time to get over her peevishness, and I should see if she would not be only too glad to have her daughter in England again, on any terms. She thought differently; and I could see, even then, she had already begun to feel the results of such an act as hers. She wrote to her cousin, on whom she seemed to place firm reliance, and sent message after message to her mother; but the answers that came back through the same channel, were only of a nature to sting and harden her. Something was written in disparagement of her husband that made her, in defiance of the prohibition, send off a letter to her mother direct, and from her she received an answer; what it was, I do not know, but Adelaide wrote no more—has never dared to write again.

'There was no time now for Walter to go home, so he only wrote to take leave and announce his marriage; and I believe the gradual failure of his mother's already wavering intellects dates from that time. He had always been her darling.

'They corresponded regularly with me; Walter bought his promotion, and through some family friends of hers out there, got a command, and showed great spirit on several occasions. They might have done well, if he only would have been prudent; as it was—but it is no use talking of that. His wife, he told me in all his letters, was everything to him; such an angel of goodness, so clever, such a head for managing and remembering things! Poor boy, he could appreciate that, for he had none. And from all I heard, I could perceive how she was thinking and working for him, keeping him up to the mark, saving his money, curtailing all her own expenses and comforts to make up for his recklessness; and never

did she write a word of complaint or blame. They had two children—Walter, whom you have seen, and a little girl, whose death was a blow that she was long in recovering. She had named it after her mother, in the hope of placing it in her arms one day ; and when it died it seemed, she has told me since, as if that mother's curse was visibly at work upon her. Then came war again, and in one of those unhappy disasters we remember too well, Walter and part of his regiment, with several ladies, children, and women, were missing. It was some time before the truth was known ; how they had been beguiled into a pass—the greater number cut to pieces—the rest made prisoners, or scattered over the country ; how Walter had fallen among the first, and Adelaide and her little boy saved by a native servant, who hid them with friends of his own, and helped them, through toils and hardships and danger, to a place of safety. Not from herself, but from other quarters did I hear how she had behaved through it all—fearless, heroic in imminent peril—patient, uncomplaining under privation—her first anxiety had been to clear her husband's honour ; and the evidence she gave was so lucid and forcible, it removed the unfavourable impression, and Captain Lyndon was named in the despatches with regret, if not with praise. I was in hopes all this might have stirred up her family to some compassionate feeling ; but whether they expected her to make advances she was too proud to do—or whether, as I have since had reason to surmise, some underhand influence interposed to prevent any kind of intention being carried out—when she came back, a widow with an only child, and the poor native as her sole attendant, there was no one to welcome her but myself, and no home for her but Cannymoor. There she has been ever since, and there, I suppose, she must remain till she has pined her heart away.'

'No, Harry, no!' exclaimed Emma, with tears in her eyes. 'Something must, something *shall* be done for her!'

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## CHAPTER XI.

And truly, I'll devise some honest slanders  
To stain my cousin with : one doth not know  
How much an ill word may empoison liking.—*Shakespeare.*

EMMA was one of those quick-pulsed individuals who form their plans, consider them, mature them, and begin putting them into execution, in the same amount of time that one, with a slower circulation, would require to conceive the original idea. All the time she was making tea for her husband and guest, she was arranging in her mind the details of her scheme ; and by the time she could lay it privately before Henry, she was quite ready to go to work. Her plan was, to avail themselves of a wish, repeatedly expressed by

Mr. Lyndon, that they would pay him a visit at Cannymoor ; and proposed as soon as possible to go down (it would do the baby a great deal of good, and Henry too), stay there as long as they found it advisable, persuade Lady Adelaide to come back with them to London, and then, somehow or other (for even Emma's sanguine spirit and imagination did not see exactly how it was to be done), bring about an interview between her and her mother.

'All these letters and *go-betweens*,' argued she, 'are only more tedious ways of doing what a few words, face to face, would do in five minutes. It is the old resource of novel-writers, you know, to prevent the parties from coming to a sensible explanation. I am quite sure that both mother and daughter, in their secret souls, must long to own to each other where they have been wrong ; but they will never do it through other people. Let us only entice that poor thing here, and win her confidence, and comfort her ; and something will be sure to turn up. You will find some way of managing it.'

Henry listened in silence, with a face expressing anything but enthusiasm ; for whatever value he set on his wife's hearty sympathy and kindness, he was much too good a husband to let a plan be made in a hurry without throwing a little cold water upon it. Emma, in a fever to begin making arrangements, waited eagerly for his assent.

'What is it, dear ?' she asked, seeing it did not come. 'Do you disapprove of the whole affair ?'

'No,' said he, coolly ; 'on the contrary, I think it a very clever scheme, with only one or two little objections, that may be of no consequence. First, that you will kill the child if you take her to such a bleak region this time of year ; secondly, that if I take you, I must leave you there, for I am much too busy to stay out of town ; and thirdly, that the chances are, Lady Adelaide will not thank you for your interference.'

Emma looked rather blank, especially at the last intimation.

'Why, you spoke so highly of her to Mr. Randolph—I fancied her so amiable and interesting——'

'I retract nothing I said, my love. If you fancy I said more, I cannot help it. The best of you have your little failings, just to remind us you are mortal ; and hers lies in—what shall I call it ?—a decided tendency to go her own way, in preference to anybody else's.'

'But, Harry, I do not want to dictate or interfere ; I only want to help her.'

'Exactly, my love ; and that is just what she is most likely not to allow for an instant. But try, if you like, for you cannot do much harm, even if you do but little good.'

Poor encouragement this! Emma concealed her disappointment, and quietly let the matter drop. She consoled herself with the conviction that Mr. Randolph would do something, if she did not; and that Harry, however provoking in the beginning, was always right in the end.

She was not mistaken in one opinion, at any rate. Sleep was chary of its favours to Maurice Randolph the night after that conversation. It was late before he attempted to court them, and when he did, it was not so easy to lay the spirits from the vasty deep of memory and thought, as he had found it to call them up. Henry Lyndon's narrative had moved him more than he could have believed possible; and a keen sense of self-reproach added its sting to many others. If he had only been more patient, if he had made more allowance for impetuosity of temper, or faults of education, they might have parted in anger, but not irrevocably; and when his prosperity came, he might have honourably entered the lists, and made one bold effort to snatch the priceless jewel from the destiny in store. Oh! if he had, how different had that destiny been!

'As my wife,' he thought, again and again, 'she should never have been exposed to the contempt and anger of her family, or anybody else. No finger should have dared to point her out as the disobedient, wilful daughter, who threw herself away on a man unable to appreciate her value, or support her in her proper position. Openly, in the face of the sun, should she have been made my own; and once mine, how would I not have fenced in her path with tenderness and watchful care—shielded her, thought for her, striven for her, if necessary; or, if her ambition aimed to rise, gone upward in spite of the whole world's opposition, and carried her with me, or died! Dreams, dreams all! She never cared whether I died or lived, and never will. All she had to give was flung away on that brainless piece of selfishness in a red coat, who made her sacrifice her whole life, first to his mad passion, and then to his spendthrift folly! Ah, poor fellow! it is hard to revile the dead: but I am glad I know the real version of the case, and not only my friend Miss Lyndon's. Yes, I can well imagine what an agony that proud spirit must have passed through before it stooped to deceive; and in what a web of sorrow and difficulty she has been struggling in ever since; with no one to help her—scouted, neglected, or worried out of her life by them all. And because she had not trouble enough, I must needs add to her store. But it is all for the best; but for that unlucky letter, I should not have known what I do now. I see my way at last to revenge; and it shall be such as a heart like hers will feel, till it ceases to beat; a revenge worthy both of herself and me.'



Acting on this new principle with the energy he invariably flung into every fresh scheme, the next morning was devoted to reconnoitring the ground he proposed to occupy. A few leading inquiries, a little study of the Red Book and Court Guide, a conversation with one or two of those convenient acquaintances who know everything about everybody that is anybody, put Randolph in possession of sufficient facts and particulars to enable him to commence operations, by sending up his card at the house of Mrs. Marsden in Bryanstone Square. He had great doubts as to his being remembered by this old lady ; but in the siege he was commencing, it seemed a desirable outpost to secure, and he had no intention of being daunted by a repulse. It was just as well he had not, for when he was ushered into the darkened drawing-room, where old Mrs. Marsden, somewhat stouter than when he saw her last, was seated with her companion, a young lady of sixteen, it was plain she did not know him in the least. Her curtsy was that of good-natured indifference, and her look expressed distinctly that she was perfectly aware he was a begging-letter writer, swindler, impostor, or madman ; but that as a matter of breeding, she chose to treat him as a gentleman, and hoped he would behave as one.

‘I was afraid you would hardly remember me, Mrs. Marsden,’ said Randolph, advancing fearlessly ; ‘my change of name and appearance are sufficient to account for it.’

The old lady took up her trumpet, and turned to her companion.

‘What does he say about change and accounts ? Want a subscription, eh ?’

The young lady, blushing, and smothering an intense desire to laugh, repeated Randolph’s words through the trumpet. He bowed, and thanked her with a smile.

‘Changed his name ?’ repeated Mrs. Marsden. ‘Ask him what it was, my dear.’

The young lady offered the trumpet to the visitor, but was stopped.

‘Don’t want people shouting at me that I know nothing about,’ she said, sinking her voice to what she innocently believed to be a careful whisper. ‘Speak civilly to him, and ask him what his name was.’

‘Maurice Gray,’ said Randolph, in answer to the young lady’s embarrassed glance.

‘Maurice Gray !’ repeated the old lady, shaking her head, when this was transmitted to her ear ; ‘pooh, nonsense, my dear child ! the man has been dead and buried these ten years.’

‘Indeed !’ said Randolph, as Miss Brittan demurely turned to him for an explanation. ‘No wonder, then, he is forgotten ; but

living or dead, *he* does not forget all kindnesses at Mrs. Marsden's hands, nor at those of his earliest friend, General Conway.'

The tone in which this was spoken arrested the old lady's attention, her deafness being of a somewhat wilfully intermittent character, utterly baffling all reasonable calculation. She turned briskly to Miss Brittan, whose pretty mouth would not remain grave, do what she might.

'Pull up the blinds, my dear, and let me see his face. Ah!' after a pause of deliberate examination, when a little daylight had been admitted; 'so it is; sit down, sir, if you please.' And she put the trumpet into his hand, and composed herself into an attitude of attention. Randolph, who knew her ways of old, though they had increased in peculiarity with her infirmities, tried to forget how hard Miss Brittan was trying not to laugh, and waited to be questioned.

'Whose name?' was the first in the category.

'My uncle's.'

'Fortune with it?'

'Yes, Mrs. Marsden.'

'Right; not much good without. Married?'

'No.'

'Mean to——?'

'Certainly not.'

'Eh?' The trumpet was lowered, and the old lady sat considering; Miss Brittan, profiting by the unusual daylight, became absorbed in a long strip of embroidery, and shook visibly behind her work-box. Randolph waited with marvellous patience, and presently his examination was renewed.

'Where have you been?'

'Travelling for the last ten years.'

'Where are you staying?'

'At the Waterloo.'

'Seen Charlotte Conway yet?'

'No.'

'Nor Lady Delaunay?'

'I have not had that honour.'

'Remember the old general?'

'I revere his memory.'

'Indeed, then, you might have thought of him sooner, and not have thrown him over as you did, Mr. Maurice Gray. He took it very unkind of you, I can tell you that. Miss Brittan, my dear, the cat seems uneasy in her sleep; just soothe her a little, will you?'

Miss Brittan put down her work, and lifting a sleepy, sleek

tabby on to her lap, commenced a series of disguised torments on the ill-fated animal, with a most painstaking expression of face, as if its happiness and moral culture were the dearest objects of her existence. Mrs. Marsden put up her trumpet again.

‘Charlotte Conway not married yet.’

‘Ah!’ said Randolph, dubiously.

‘She is not so young as she was.’

Randolph tried to look surprised, but not with the best success.

‘She lives with her aunt now; she comes here very often, and sits with me while that child goes out for a walk. Is pussy happy with you, Miss Brittan, my dear?’

Miss Brittan, who had by this time nearly reduced the cat to a species of insanity, from fruitless efforts either to sleep or get away, looked up with a most benevolent smile, but meeting Randolph’s eye, became suddenly and surprisingly grave.

‘The young man—Delaunay—comes here sometimes. Remember him, Mr. Gray?’

Randolph explained they had never met.

‘Ah! but you remember his sister?’

That was quite another thing; though he could not answer so indifferently but that Miss Brittan’s eyes rose for a minute, and her ears pricked up with great increase of interest.

‘They tell me Delaunay is wonderfully clever—perhaps he is. He is gone somewhere to see an eclipse or something—obliged to be there to make sure it is done right, I suppose. I have a notion the world went round before he was born, and will go on when he is buried: but then I don’t understand those things. It’s not the way his father showed his cleverness, or his mother either, for that matter; but it is no affair of mine or yours.’

This Randolph could not dispute, and a silence ensued. The old lady, as before, was the first to speak.

‘Plenty of changes since your time.’

He bowed assent.

‘We were a merry party, you young ones and we old. All broken up now; the general gone—you gone—dear little Ada gone—ah, dear me! and here I am, obliged to that child there for a young face to look at. I must have something young and pretty near me, and Mary Delaunay was kind enough to send me one of her pets. She has a regular tribe of them, and finds situations and homes for them all; does not she, Miss Brittan, my dear?’

Randolph liked the saucy eyes all the better for the sincerity with which they confirmed her prompt assent. He made some courteous remark on Lady Delaunay’s well-known discernment and knowledge of character; and added, he believed she had ceased to take any part in politics. Mrs. Marsden heard him this time

without the trumpet, and prevented her young companion from answering.

‘Yes, and a good thing too—women are best out of those things but she is as busy as ever she was. How she can stand it, I have no idea, but what with her schools, and her churches, and her young people, and the letters she has to write, and the visits she makes in all sorts of disagreeable places, and one thing and another, she never has a minute, I am sure, to sit down and be comfortable. I know it would kill me in a week. I understand what it all means, though, stupid as I am. Ever since that poor dear child—Miss Brittan, my dear, I am sadly afraid the poor cat is not the thing. Bring her to me.’

Miss Brittan complied demurely. Randolph started up, and relieved her of her interesting burden, which he established comfortably on his own knee. ‘I am known already as a doctor of some repute,’ he told Mrs. Marsden, ‘and I am an experienced practitioner among pet animals.’ Then, after caressing and seriously examining the sleek creature, who eyed him with a touching resignation that seemed to say, ‘Isn’t it a shame they won’t let me alone?’ he gravely took up the trumpet. Mrs. Marsden was all attention.

‘What is it?’

‘Decidedly feverish,’ said Randolph, oracularly. ‘Wants air.’

‘Does it? Poor thing! how very odd!—and I am so afraid of the cold. Miss Brittan, my dear, would it be asking too much if you would take pussy into another room, and give her a little fresh air at the window? Perhaps you would not mind fanning her a little if she should not get better soon.’

‘Oh, not at all, ma’am,’ said the young lady, as she resumed her charge, now mewing disconsolately; and with a merry glance at Maurice, veiled in an instant by the deepest gravity and reserve, vanished with surprising readiness.

The advantage thus gained, Randolph lost no time in following up; a little dexterity steered the conversation, *viâ* cats in general and bygone favourites in particular, to their old days and the household circle of General Conway; when he soon discovered that ‘little Ada,’ as she always called Lady Adelaide, still retained a place in her kinswoman’s affections, and was regretted and yearned over as much as her easy, contented nature could regret or yearn.

‘They tell me she behaved very ill, and I suppose she did. One can’t defend the imprudence of that marriage; but, dear me, young people will be silly—mad sometimes; and you generally find the elders have been more or less to blame. And so it was in this case; the child doted on her mother, and yet saw very little of her. Mary Delaunay is a clever creature and a good creature, but

even she cannot do everything and be everywhere at once; and while she was keeping the world in order, that poor young thing's head ran wild, I suppose, on her own romantic notions. We often wished you had stayed with us, Mr. Gray; you had more influence with her than any one else, and we all remarked how much she felt your leaving.'

'I had influence with her?' repeated he, hastily.

Mrs. Marsden put up her trumpet. 'Eh? what's that?'

'What influence could I have?'

'Well, you surprise me. You must have been blind or wonderfully modest not to see how much she cared for your good opinion. I only know she quite took it to heart that you should despise her, as she told me you did.'

'Did she say I despised her? What made her imagine such a thing?'

'How should I know? Your own behaviour, I suppose. And it quite puzzled me; for to tell you a little bit of a truth, that it don't matter your knowing now, the general and I differed about you—as to which of the girls you liked the most. I had a notion you were partial to Ada, and he was positive it was Charlotte.'

'Good heavens!' cried he, starting, as the blood mounted into his face. She eyed him intently through her spectacles, with her trumpet half raised.

'Well, Mr. Gray—or whatever your name is—you seem mightily confounded. It was nothing so very astonishing, and I can only say, we both agreed the girls might do worse—and so they have, you see; for Ada married badly, and Charlotte hasn't married at all. If the Delaunays had chosen to push you, you had headpiece enough to hold your own, and might have been at the top of the tree by this time, which Bertram will never be, let his mother sigh over him as long as she pleases.'

'You forget the difference of rank, Mrs. Marsden. The world in general would not have been so liberal as the good general and yourself; and I am sure Lady Delaunay would not.'

'Eh? no, I suppose not. And as you were always as proud as Lucifer, you were pleased to go off in a fit of grand indignation because you thought other people did not or would not appreciate you, I suppose; for I never could hear the rights of it. I only know you left us all uncomfortable; the general quite put out, and the girls out of spirits. We were never so happy again as when you were with us. Ah, I have often thought about you; yes, I have, and wondered whether you were alive and remembered your old friends; and I seem to have several things I wanted to tell you, or show you, or something—but I am getting very old, and I cannot always remember.'

She took off her glasses, wiped her eyes, and pressed her forehead, as if her memory was a little confused. Randolph waited patiently, and when she seemed inclined to listen, assured her with great kindness and sincerity, that his time was at her disposal, and nothing would gratify him more than that she should make use of him, just as the general would have done. This pleased her very much. 'That just reminds me of what I wanted, and so I will. Do you know, a little while before his death, he was often talking to himself about you—if Maurice Gray were but here, he would see to this, or arrange that; and just when he was near his end, poor dear man, he seemed to be uneasy, and I was sitting by him, and he pointed to his old travelling writing-case—I dare say you remember it—there it is behind you—and he said, "Take care of that; Maurice Gray will help you—" or something of that sort; I am a little hard of hearing, you know, and I couldn't quite make it out; or whether he was wandering, as perhaps he was. But when he was gone, I did open the case, and there were only papers and letters, much too fine for my weak old eyes, so I locked them up again, and there they have been ever since. Now, as you are not dead and buried, as I thought you must be, I should like you to look them over, if you will, and see if there is anything particular in them. I should not like them to fall into anybody else's hands when I am gone too.'

While this conversation was taking place, a different scene was going on in the next room, a boudoir, divided by double doors from the drawing-room. Miss Brittan having conveyed the cat thither according to orders, and given her, of her own free good-will, a little stimulating exercise, in the shape of hunting and chasing under chairs, tables, and other articles of upholstery—had thrown herself on a small sofa, her favourite corner, and was in the act of giving way to one of the longest and dreariest yawns that ever strained mortal lungs, when the sound of wheels stopping at the door roused her with the hope of variety; and the glimpse she got of the carriage made her quickly open the door, and show her smiling face to the visitor as she crossed the passage. This had the desired effect; as the latter instantly dismissed the attending footman, before he could announce her in the drawing-room, and glided into the boudoir.

'Oh, dear, Miss Conway!' was her first welcome, 'I am so glad you are come; I was feeling so tired and stupid, I did not know what to do.'

'Poor child!' said Miss Conway, caressing her; 'it is very trying for you, I am sure. Why are you here by yourself?'

'I am airing the cat, Miss Conway.'

'You absurd child, what do you mean?'

'True, I assure you. I was told to bring her here for fresh air; as if anything was ever fresh in this dull house! so, as I am sure I want refreshing too, I have been trying to read, but every book she gives me is so dreadfully *good*, I always go to sleep. Have you—no?—Yes, I am sure you have!—Oh, how kind you are! *Do* let me see!'

Miss Conway indulgently allowed her to seize her velvet bag, and rifle its contents; several small, foreign-looking volumes, and a white paper parcel, which, on being torn open, proved to be one of the prettiest *bonbonnières* in the world, or even in Paris. The young lady clapped her hands, and nearly screamed with delight; but checked herself with a nod at the double door.

'Yes?' said Miss Conway, following the glance, and instinctively dropping her voice;—'any one there?'

'Only a gentleman, and the other door is shut. Oh, Miss Conway! another of those dear, dreadful stories. How happy I shall be! I shall not sleep all night.'

'You see my indulgence gets the better of my prudence, as usual,' said Miss Conway. 'If it were known now that I humoured you in this way——'

'Oh, but nobody knows, or can know. I keep them locked up, and read in bed. She always will have me go early to bed, so I bolt my door, and read half the night. And *pralines*, too; how delicious! Oh, Miss Conway, you are——'

Well, only take care. If Lady Delaunay knew, I should never hear the last of it, or you either.'

'Would she think it so very wrong to read these?'

'To *have* read them, you mean,' said Miss Conway, laughing. 'Yes, I should be sorry to tell her how many you had read already. It is a breach of rules she never forgives.'

'Oh dear!' sighed Miss Brittan, laying the tempting volume down; 'well then, I think I won't.'

'As you please about this one; it will make little or no difference, that I can see. You may remember I advised you not, at the beginning.'

'Yes, you did; but——'

'But I was persuaded to indulge you, out of pity for your dulness here, thinking my aunt would make allowances for so young a person shut up with an old one.'

'Yes, indeed!'

'Ay; but I find she thinks you ought to be as happy and grateful as the day is long, taking a pride and a pleasure in waiting on so kind an old lady, and her cat——'

'Ah, that plague of a cat! Does Lady Delaunay think I ought to be dragging her about whenever Mrs. Marsden fancies she is fidgety?'

'Yes; she considers it your duty to do whatever gives her satisfaction; and I suppose it is. You seem vastly attentive to pussy, as far as I can see.'

'Bringing her in here? Oh, that was only a trick of *his* to get me out of the room, *I* know. He had something private he wanted to talk about.'

'He? The gentleman there now? What is his name?'

'Well, he has two, it appears. His card came up as Mr. Randolph, but he introduced himself as Mr. Maurice Gray. Are you ill, Miss Conway? You look so white; can I get you anything?'

'Yes, dear, I am rather faint; I have not been well lately; a drop of sal-volatile, if you have such a thing——'

'If I have not, Mrs. Marsden has, upstairs,' said her young friend, hastening away in some alarm.

Miss Conway breathed freer when she was alone, but the pulsation of her heart was painfully disturbed. She pressed her hands to her temples, moved hastily to the inner door between the apartments, opened it cautiously, and drew near the outer one. It was but a moment's waiting, and any doubts she might have entertained were dispelled. His voice could not be mistaken, though unheard so long. Tears, such as rarely moistened those worldly lids, too well accustomed to study self-interest for to have time or taste for ebullitions of feeling, rolled down her cheeks as she leaned against the door; and for a moment it seemed as if she must let loose, in one wild passionate cry, all that had been choked and crushed in her heart and memory, but never destroyed or rooted out. The force of habit strengthened her to forbear, and she listened on, with straining ears, and as she did so, her face changed; the gentler passion chased away by an emotion akin to terror. How long she might have stood there entranced is doubtful, for Miss Brittan's voice at her elbow made her start, with a guilty sense of detection. She came back into the boudoir with a forced smile.

'You were so long, my dear, I was nearly going in without you. When I got so far, however, the room seemed to turn round with me, and I was obliged to stand still to recover. Thank you. I expect Lady Delaunay to join me here presently; so if you have anything to prepare before she comes——'

Miss Brittan hesitated a moment, caught up her French books, and hid them in a table-drawer.

'There, I can't help it. I am in for it now, and if I should be blamed as much whether I kept this one or not, I may as well have the enjoyment.'

'That is your own affair, my dear, entirely. I shall do my best to prevent you being blamed, you may depend, as long as I think



you deserve my protection. I believe you consider me your friend, do you not ?

‘Oh yes, of course.’

‘And you keep my wishes in mind, when I am not here ?’

‘Do I not, when there is not a letter comes to her that I do not get a peep into for you, and you know it.’

‘Well, I know you do *her* that service ; for she is so liable to be imposed upon, it is quite necessary some one should be on the watch to protect her interests. Has she been talking of—of *me*, lately ?’

‘She mentioned you just now.’

‘Yes ; and in what way ?’

‘She told Mr. Randolph that you were not married yet, and that you were not so young as you were.’

Miss Conway bit her lip, and forced a laugh. ‘He is an old acquaintance, and knows her blunt ways. Tell me all that passed, before I go in and see if he remembers me.’

The young lady repeated with the accuracy of frequent practice the conversation, as far as she had heard it.

‘And after you came in here, my dear, did you happen to overhear any more ?’

‘I never listen at the doors, Miss Conway.’

‘Quite right, my love : but without listening one may hear sometimes, as one may keep one’s own counsel in some little matters we wot of, without exactly telling untruth. You are *quite sure* you overheard nothing more ?’

‘Well, once, when I got up to shut the door this side, I did just hear her say in her shrill way something about one being sure it was Ada, and the other it was Charlotte—but that was all.’

‘I shall go in at once,’ said Miss Conway, stifling a sigh of oppression. She was beginning to feel she had heard enough. The next moment she was advancing with outstretched hands to greet her old friend, and welcome him back to England.

Randolph had risen to take leave, with three small packets in his hand, which he thrust into his coat pocket, as he returned her greeting. She smiled, to show she noticed the action ; and taxed him gaily with resuming his old business-like habits, as if by instinct, directly he came among them again.

‘You do not mean to say, Mrs. Marsden, that you have been giving Mr. Gray—I beg Mr. Randolph’s pardon—the old name is so strong in its associations—that you have been giving him work to do on his first visit ! That is really too bad, I must say.’

Nobody answered ; the empty writing-case stood on the table. She glanced curiously into it, and then at Randolph’s face. ‘My poor uncle’s papers,’ she said softly.

‘I have not yet examined them,’ was his cautious reply.

‘Ah, you were always a diplomatist: there was no penetrating into your secrets of old, I know. But may I request the favour, if you should meet with anything that you think I ought to know, that you will call and tell me? Perhaps I may be a diplomatist too: for now you cannot in ordinary civility escape calling, at any rate.’

There was no resisting so much friendliness and cordiality. He thought of his first evening at Caunymoor Manorhouse, and the different manner of his recognition, as he resealed himself by Miss Conway’s side, and they fell into sociable conversation: Mrs. Marsden, with a murmur about seeing after poor pussy, having trotted off, and left them to themselves.

Miss Conway’s curiosity about his travels would not be satisfied with a few summary replies; and she assured him, nothing short of a full and graphic history, according to old classical precedent, would content her. ‘As for my aunt Delaunay, who will be here directly, and whom you must wait to see—she will be charmed with you, and them; only be prepared for puzzling questions about physical geography, and antiquities, and all the dry part of a traveller’s journal, which would never occur to poor simple minds like mine. I only want to know your own personal fortunes—“the battles, sieges, perils you have passed—” in which, no doubt, you quite forget old days, and those old friends, who have never forgotten *you*, or ceased to wish you happiness and a safe return.’

He shook his head. ‘I forget, Miss Conway? I have often wished I could. And to be remembered so kindly, was more than I could either expect or hope to deserve. I have found so many changes in people and in things, that I am made painfully sensible how changed I myself must be.’

‘Yes, you are changed,’ she said, in a low voice; ‘but only as time developes without really altering. The moment you smile I see my old tutor again—the “guide, philosopher, and friend” of some of my happiest days, before I knew the cold-heartedness and selfishness of human hearts, as I have had but too much cause to know them since. Times are changed with some of us, indeed, Mr. Randolph. I have much that I could tell, relying on you, as I feel I can do—but not *here*: the day is past when I was mistress, so to speak, of a home; I must now consult the wishes and whims of others, and be whatever it pleases them best I should be. You know how my uncle left his property?’

‘No, indeed; but attached as he was to you, I conclude you inherited a considerable share.’

‘No wonder you thought so. What will you say when I tell you that, with the exception of a few bequests to myself and some others, the whole went to old Mrs. Marsden, with power to leave

it as she pleased? Can you conceive anything so unjust—so cruel?’

‘I am surprised, indeed.’

‘Since then, I have resided with my aunt, Lady Delaunay, I felt it my duty to devote myself to her in her loneliness; but it is a trying life after the one in which you remember me. She has the warmest benevolence, and the most indefatigable energy, and will do anything for you—if you follow her lead; but once cross her plans, differ from her in opinion, violate, however unintentionally, her slightest command—and it is all over with you. It is her rule never to forgive. Perhaps such severity is to be accounted for, by the provocations she has received in the tenderest point.’

She glanced keenly at her companion. He looked very grave and attentive: there was no doubt of his being interested. After a pause she resumed, in a tone expressive of deep feeling, ‘You left us so suddenly that memorable day, I had no time to say half I felt; but indeed, I knew not till afterwards—forgive my referring to a subject so painful’ (for in spite of his self-command, the blood had rushed to his brow), ‘but when I learnt, as soon I did, what had passed between you, and how your honourable and sensitive nature had been treated, it was all I could do not to track you out, wherever you had hidden yourself, and tell you there was *one* friend at least whose heart swelled at your wrongs—whose hand was ready and eager to avenge them! I felt this, Mr. Randolph, as a woman does, who can only *feel*, and may not act. But had I been a man, and either received such an injury myself, or seen my friend so injured, thoughts and words should not have sufficed me—what I *felt* should have been shown by what I *did*!’

Her eyes flashed as they met those of Randolph, now looking very serious, almost stern, as he bowed in silent acknowledgment.

‘It led to a coolness between us,’ she resumed, presently, after waiting in vain for him to speak, ‘and though, after a time, we were reconciled—my nature being always for peace, if possible—yet it opened my eyes to defects of character to which I had been hitherto blind; and the wretched affair that happened afterwards, grieved, distressed me, made me ill—but was not really a surprise. One who could behave so *once*, could do it again; and after wronging so cruelly a heart like yours, the next step was to break her mother’s—as broken it would have been, I am sure, but for *me*. And for such a man, too!—a good-looking, conceited, empty-headed young puppy, whom I could never endure; for though he was introduced to us by one of our friends in his regiment, I soon found he belonged to a vulgar family—actually, some are connected with trade—tallow-chandlers, for what I know. Imagine such a match for a Chester! but there is no accounting for tastes, and I

believe she is devoted to them and their ways—become quite one of themselves, which is perhaps the wisest thing she can do. Of course *our* intercourse is over, except by letter. I show her what kindness is in my power, and have stood between her and her family's anger often and often : but that is all any one can do ; she has chosen her path in life, and we can only deplore her choice, and hope it makes her happy.'

The conversation was here interrupted by the return of Mrs. Marsden, followed immediately after by the entrance of Lady Delaunay. It was with peculiar feelings of interest that Randolph found himself in the presence of this lady, in whom he at once recognized the accuracy of Henry Lyndon's description. Small, thin, fragile in figure, with piercing grey eyes, rather deeply set, and silky white hair that had once been a delicate brown, her face would anywhere have commanded attention, and her bearing respect ; but that which impressed those she met had little to do with either. The gift of ruling others is as special a gift as genius or beauty, and it sat on Lady Delaunay's brow as lightly and unconsciously as the snow of her threescore and five winters, but unmistakeable as the circlet of royalty. Her dignity was the more striking from the absence of all external adjuncts ; for her dress was remarkable for nothing but sober colours, and a neatness that was almost precision ; and her manner, instead of repelling by coldness and hauteur, was winning from its kindness and ease. Yet the moment her eye was felt, its sovereignty was felt too. Many an audacious spirit, that would have gone into the breach of a beleaguered city as to a pastime, had quailed and shrunk before its quiet penetration ; while many a wavering purpose had grown into life, and many a despairing struggle into glad success, through a word of praise, a smile of encouragement, from lips that never praised lightly or in vain. Circumstances and policy might make her a constitutional ruler ; but nature and inclination had intended her for a despot of the highest order—that, like the sun, would shine to fructify and enlighten—but like him, too, shine alone.

She had heard of Randolph often, though they had never met ; and as soon as she understood who it was that was so warmly introduced, addressed him, not as a stranger, but as an old family friend ; made him sit down by her side, and told him how much her uncle had said in his praise—thanking him for past kindnesses and attention to one she had loved so well. Then she led him on, imperceptibly, to talk on various subjects, drawing him out as only she knew how to do, till he found himself unawares exerting his powers, and doing his utmost to win one of those quick, approving glances, that never failed to mark whatever was worth noting. She

possessed to perfection that secret of popularity, which consists in making those you converse with show themselves to the best advantage; and instead of lightly touching on general topics, and waiting to see how much or how little others knew, which Randolph in the security of conscious power was rather fond of doing, he was insensibly led to produce his own stores, varied, often quaint, and rich from large reading and observant travel—conscious that he was appreciated, and yet not conscious, till afterwards, how much he had been influenced by that appreciation.

In spite of all the charm of such converse, however, he found himself, more than once, forgetting subject, speaker, and scene—either in the thought of what one aching heart, far away, would give, for one of those smiles—or losing what she said in the earnest contemplation of what she was. It would have been difficult to believe this could be Adelaide's mother—unlike as they were in complexion, in height, in form; but for the shape and character of the mouth, so fascinating in its smile—so calmly resolute when at rest—so imperious in its curves when its passions were aroused. This, the soft voice, and the grace of movement, reminded him of the daughter again and again; and now he began to understand what that daughter's suffering had been under such a mother's anger. Was that anger implacable?—could that suffering be removed?—were questions that forced themselves so urgently at every word Lady Delaunay spoke, that he answered at last very much at random, and discovered to his confusion, that he had just been expressing the warmest interest in the subject of female education and improvement—assenting unreservedly to something Lady Delaunay had said, but without an idea what it could be. He had presence of mind enough to cover his momentary inattention, by throwing himself with extra zeal into the educational cause; and as the acutest minds are not exempt from the illusion, that what we are interested in ourselves must interest everybody else, she readily believed him to be in earnest.

He found he had lighted on a subject nearest to her heart, and the earnestness that had been assumed grew into reality. He told her he had been meditating how best to return the hospitalities he had lately received in a retired country district; and it had occurred to him he could not do better than build them a new school-house, which would be available for lectures, &c., when required. It was only a vague idea so far; but any advice Lady Delaunay's great experience could afford, would be most valuable. She listened attentively, and with evident pleasure; but before she would give an opinion, asked him, with a kindness that could not offend, if he was quite sure he had no nearer claims on his fortune to satisfy *first*.

'Whoever comes to me for counsel in their good deeds, Mr. Randolph, must always expect this seemingly officious question. I have a wholesome dread of *Corban*, whether it be in the shape of time or money.'

'I have no claims on me, madam ; I am alone in the world.'

'*Alone ?*' repeated Miss Conway, in a tone of mild reproach.

'*Alone ?*' said Lady Delaunay, with a shake of the head ; 'that is a dreary, and I trust, a rare solitude. But *you* have your happiness yet to build ; make up your mind well, before you undertake a work in which it is not easy to calculate nicely beforehand, or to stop when you once begin.'

'My mind is made up. My happiness must be made, if made at all, where Lady Delaunay finds hers—in being useful to others.'

She put her hand on his arm. 'Learn two things, my dear sir, since you are not above learning from an old woman's experience. One is, not to overpraise on hearsay—and the other, to expect anything you please from these undertakings—recreation, instruction, employment—good to others—but not happiness to yourself. Now I have delivered my conscience you may command me ; I shall have the greatest pleasure in plundering you to the utmost.'

The subject was then entered into with genuine zest and goodwill ; so many points, however, had to be considered, that Lady Delaunay was not long in deciding that the person who could give Mr. Randolph the best advice was her own parish clergyman, with whom she had an appointment that afternoon ; and as whatever was to be done, had better always be done at once, there was a seat in her carriage at his service, if he would accept it. Whatever procured him a nearer insight into her character was so valuable at that moment, that he accepted the offer with gratitude. This being settled, Lady Delaunay looked suddenly round the room. 'Where is my little friend, Miss Brittan ?'

'Well, I went to call her just now,' said Mrs. Marsden, 'and the child was so deep in her studies, she never heard or saw me ; so I e'en let her be. Girls were not so fond of their books when *I* was young ; *that* came on in your time, Mary, and this child is one after your own heart there.'

'It is the first I have heard of it,' said Lady Delaunay, with a smile, 'and I own to a little incredulity in such sudden conversions. Is she in the next room ?'

She was rising as she spoke, when Miss Conway hastily prevented her, and begged to save her the trouble. As she expected, she found the young lady absorbed, heart and soul, in the first volume of her new book. Miss Conway's hand on her shoulder made her bound in her chair.

'Lady Delaunay is waiting to see you, and to know what those

studies can be that make you blind and deaf to all sublunary matters.'

'Oh, goodness, what shall I do?—what shall I say? Will she be very angry, really?'

'Why do you ask, when you know as well as I do, that she *never* forgives an act of disobedience? Not that you are bound to obey her all your life; but she considers herself your guardian, more or less, and that implies dictation.'

'Oh, she is so good to me, I love to obey her generally; but I dare not tell her this, indeed I dare not. I wish I had never seen one of the books!'

'Then I had better take these away.'

'No, no; now I have begun, I *must* see the end. Such a dreadful part just coming; I was so interested! Oh, Miss Conway, cannot you help me out of this scrape? I will do anything in the world for you, if you will!'

'Well, I will try, my dear; I believe you are a grateful little thing, so come along; put a brave face on the matter, and I will stand your friend. You promise to abide by whatever I say for you, and to do whatever I set you to do?'

'Oh, yes, yes!' said the frightened girl, hastily thrusting her forbidden pleasure again into the drawer, and endeavouring to smooth her features down into a look of unconcern and innocence. At Miss Conway's suggestion she took up the cat, and this gave her something to do with her hands and eyes, while her companion desired her only to put on her most amiable looks, and leave the rest to her.

Lady Delaunay rose as they entered, and greeted her *protégée* with more than her usual kindness.

'Mrs. Marsden has been telling me she is afraid you are too much in these warm rooms, my dear; and that it is dull for you. You are grown studious, too, it seems; is that true?'

'She will be ashamed to own the truth,' said Miss Conway, laughing; 'but I suspect the warm rooms are in the secret; for I found her most undeniably asleep over—shall I tell, Lilla? No, that would not be fair. Don't you think she looks rather pale, my dear aunt?'

'She does not look herself, certainly; a drive will do her good. May I take her out with me, Mrs. Marsden?'

'With all my heart, my dear Mary. I am sure she is a good attentive child to me and pussy, and we should be sorry to confine her too closely—shouldn't we, pussy? Give her to me, my dear, and get ready, and stay away as long as you like. I am afraid you are not well.'

'Indeed I am,' she answered, choking down a great sob, as she

met Lady Delaunay's eyes, watching her with kind anxiety; and she hastened out of the room, glad to have at least one minute's breathing time to wrestle with her conscience.

Miss Conway soon followed her upstairs.

'I am going to stay till you come back, Lilla, and now—by the way, did I not bring you cleverly through your difficulty? Telling a fib, too, in your service, which is your sin, not mine, remember. And now you must be my little representative, and tell me *all* that passes; do you understand? And, Lilla,' her voice sank cautiously, '*she* has given Mr. Randolph some papers that *I* ought to see, and must see somehow, and you must help me. They are in his coat-pocket.'

'But you do not expect me to take them out?'

'Certainly not; do nothing to attract attention; but if by any chance you get a sight of them, or if you are at home when he brings them back, and you hear them discussed—in short, you understand—I leave it all to your ingenuity. One good turn deserves another. Make haste, they are waiting for you.'

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## CHAPTER XII.

And were she not rebellious breasts to quell,  
And were she not her statutes to maintain,  
The cot, no more, I ween, were deemed the cell,  
Where comely peace of mind and decent order dwell.—*Shenstone*.

IN spite of the preoccupation of mind that made all subjects but one more or less irksome, it was impossible for Maurice Randolph to be long in the society of Lady Delaunay, and not find himself carried along by the energy of a mind, in so many ways congenial to his own. The interest, forced at first, soon came spontaneously, as his own eyes and ears became witnesses of the practical, judicious benevolence that combined the broadest purposes with the minutest attention to detail; aiming at nothing less than the mental and bodily improvement of a generation, and as the means thereto keeping as vigilant a watch upon health and spirits, as if the highest honours depended on the ability of the pupils to eat, laugh, and play. They visited some schools first, in a very poor district of her parish, and it was soon evident that she was a well-known visitor: her entrance caused no flurry or excitement, only a slight look of anxiety on the part of the mistress, soon relieved by a few kind words of friendly inquiry and commendation; for the first thing Lady Delaunay did, on entering, was to look round for something to commend, either in the attendance, the atmosphere of the room, or the orderly look of the classes, which



seemed to put new life into the teachers, and give them spirit for anything that might ensue. The children, on their parts, followed her with their eyes, which brightened as only children's can, when they met hers. Randolph saw she knew most of them personally, inquired after absent members, sick parents, or new-born brothers and sisters with the air of an old acquaintance; gave orders that one should have a frock, another an order for shoes, this one's mother a bottle of wine, that one's father a loan in money to be repaid by weekly instalments; all as if it were the simplest matter of course; she seemed quite at home among them; and when she took her departure, looked reluctant to go. Randolph handed her to her carriage. 'And is there no happiness to be gathered here?' She turned with her foot on the step, and the quick movement was very like her daughter.

'Comfort, sometimes; hope, often; conscious failure, oftenest of all. As much happiness as such materials will make, I expect and find.'

The footman waited for orders. 'To the Home in ——— Street. I am to meet Mr. Powys there, and you will be glad to meet your old friends, Lilla, I dare say.'

The Home was an institution of Lady Delaunay's founding, watched and loved by her with peculiar tenderness and care. It was intended for the education of young girls of a superior grade to the last— orphan daughters of poor clergymen, medical men, or any of the educated professions, for whom society offered no prospect in life, but that teaching and moral training of others they wanted so much themselves. Here the party were received by Lady Delaunay's friend and pastor, Mr. Powys; who having arrived only a minute and a half before them, commenced a spirited attack on ladies' unpunctuality. Lady Delaunay laid all the blame on Mr. Randolph, and forthwith consigned him to his tender mercies, as that rare prize, a philanthropist with money, good-will, and a desire to be guided in the use of them. No one was more ready to put him in the way of spending the one and employing the other than Mr. Powys; and plans and design being produced, and estimates sketched out, a promising outline was in rapid progress—when he suddenly asked his new acquaintance the name of the parish where all this was to be done?

Randolph replied, after a momentary hesitation, that as he had not yet consulted the rector, perhaps it would be premature to give the name of the parish.

'I should think so indeed,' cried Mr. Powys; 'this alters the case entirely; and the first piece of advice I give you, my dear sir, is to get your rector's consent and approval; for till then, I assure you, you will not have mine.'

‘You have no choice, Mr. Randolph,’ said Lady Delaunay. ‘We are all kept in strict discipline here ; but, perhaps, it may not be losing time to see something of our arrangements, while I am attending to a little business I have to do. No one can show them so well as Mr. Powys, who is the master here, by merit as well as by right.’

There was something rather doubtful in Mr. Powys’ smile, as he followed her retiring figure with his eyes ; but he readily undertook to show the visitor over the building, and was zealous in his commendation of its design. Everything, as Randolph failed not to observe, whether in the style of dress, the hours, the method of instruction, or the domestic arrangements, was designed to keep up the self-respect of the pupils, to encourage independence, self-reliance, and energy ; and to set their future career before them, not as an object of dread, but of honourable ambition. Randolph was struck with the intelligence of some of their countenances—the quiet sense of readiness and ability that was the fruit of the judicious training they had gone through, making what they had acquired thoroughly and practically their own, to use as they had found needful ; not a load of superficial, high-sounding knowledge veneering their ignorance for the sake of temporary display. For those among them endowed with taste and love of literature, ample means of gratification were provided, as Mr. Powys exultingly pointed out ; leading the visitor through the lecture-room, with all its neat and suitable apparatus, to the library, well supplied with the best works, English and foreign ; and warming with his theme, he dilated on the care, judgment, and outlay disbursed on the whole by a single individual.

‘My only dread is lest she should wear herself out. Though far from strong, she is a very early riser, and never fails to attend our morning service ; she is indefatigable in her visits among the poor, and her labours in the schools ; and besides all this, there is hardly a charitable institution now-a-days set on foot among ladies, that they do not try to draw her into. Half her day is spent in receiving the reports and accounts of the different agents of her benevolence—planning, arranging, and writing in behalf of those she endeavours to help on in the world, and in every way curtailing the luxuries and relaxations to which she has been accustomed, that she may have more to give. On the whole, her benevolence is of the sensible, practical character, that thorough knowledge of the world and of human nature produces in a generous disposition ; she thinks more like a man than a woman ; never wants to take my parish out of my hands, or to overcome rules to gratify feelings ; but governs the most liberal of hands by the clearest of heads.’

‘Her fortune is large, I presume ?’

'It is considerable, but not sufficient to stand all this without much prudence, and what in her station, must be great self-denial. I remarked as much to her once; but she replied that her son had enough, she had no nearer ties or claims on her wealth; was not the happiness of those who had no other protector, well worth the small privations it cost? I could not deny it; I only wish more would follow her example.'

'She must be very much beloved.'

'She ought to be. Do you know the history of that young lady who is with her to-day! Her father cheated Lady Delaunay through thick and thin, as people say—robbed her of thousands, and died in her debt; her mother was a silly extravagant creature, who helped to ruin him, and this young thing, half-educated, was left on the wide world at fourteen, penniless. Lady Delaunay sought her out, and placed her here; but found she was just the kind of girl who was likely to grow the worse for a school; so she placed her a few months ago with her relation, Mrs. Marsden, who wanted a young companion, and who, being a kind-hearted old lady, allows her plenty of time to improve herself. I only hope she makes good use of it.'

'I hope she does. I suppose Lady Delaunay meets with disappointments at times?'

'Well, yes; we must expect that. The best intentions fail, and the best methods may have their weak points.'

'You say she has spent a great deal of money here; there must have been a great deal of *love* given with it, or it would not have been laid out so well.'

'Love? I do believe she cares for these girls as if they were her own.'

'Rather more, I should say.'

Mr. Powys turned sharply to see what this meant.

'When I was in England last,' continued Randolph, 'Lady Delaunay had a daughter.'

'*Had*, sir—true; she can hardly be said to have one now.'

'Whose fault is that?'

'I do not know the particulars of the story; but there can be no question where the fault lies, when such a mother is estranged.'

'Has anything been done to reconcile them?'

'I believe so; but from all I have heard, the offence Lady Delaunay has received is one she will never pardon.'

'What? all this superfluity of kindness and consideration, forbearance and tender care, poured forth upon strangers—and not one drop for that parched and weary heart, that thirsts for it as for a spring of life? I cannot wrong a generous woman so cruelly as to believe it.'

‘Do you know Lady Adelaide, then?’ asked Mr. Powys, roused by his earnestness, and observing him with some curiosity.

‘I know enough of her to tell you *this*—there is not one of those young girls whose heart is so desolate—whose orphanhood so solitary; nor can forty thousand of these, with all their quantity of love and gratitude, make up her sum. The crumbs of tenderness that fall from their table would spread her a feast of rejoicing; there is bread enough and to spare for those in the highways and hedges, and she is perishing with hunger—hunger worse than Jerusalem famine—inasmuch as it takes longer to kill.’

Mr. Powys was silent for a few moments, still watching intently the dark, impassioned features.

‘Why do you tell me this, sir?’ he asked, presently.

‘Because you are Lady Delaunay’s friend and counsellor, and it is to you I look to tell her the truth.’

‘Pardon me, sir, you mistake; her friend I am, with all my heart, and her counsellor when she asks my advice; but I have never presumed to interfere in her private affairs, and I am quite sure she would be very much surprised if I did.’

‘But, sir, if you have a friend you admire and revere, who is willing to make costly exertions of self-denial for good works like these, would you not hold it a sacred duty to teach her, where she offers sacrifice, to offer mercy too?’

‘Look here, my dear sir, you are so earnest yourself, you may think me rather cold; but, supposing such a case, I do not think it would be wise of me to do what would set such a friend against the very course I meant her to follow. It is one thing—don’t you see?—to direct a lady’s plans of benevolence, and another to take a liberty she could not allow or forgive.’

‘So you would rather let a magnanimous woman commit an act of severity—not to say, injustice—which you yourself condemn, than run the risk of offending by telling her of it: rather speak evil of her behind her back than rely on the worth of character for which you give her credit. For my part, I have seen nothing in her to-day that is not so good and gentle, that what you are all afraid of I cannot conceive.’

‘Ah!’ said Mr. Powys, thrusting his hand briskly through his hair, ‘then suppose, my dear sir, you wait till you *can*.’

The entrance of Lady Delaunay broke off the argument at this far from satisfactory point. She was followed by Miss Brittan, the lady resident, and several of the young inmates. These last clustered round their benefactress, eager for a share of her notice. One had a letter to show from a brother she had fitted out for Australia—another had inquiries to make about a delayed ship—every one had some subject on which they craved either her

approval, her opinion, or her sympathy; and those whose shyness kept them silent, were soon won by the winning voice, that seemed to know by instinct the very question they longed to ask, and to find exactly the answer required by each; embodying in their minds all that this world could offer in wisdom, power, and benevolence. And Randolph watched, listened, observed, and looked askance at Mr. Powys; Mr. Powys twitched his mouth on one side, and raised his eyebrows.

The letter from Australia had led to some discussion, and the map of the world being spread on the table, an eager group were pressing round Lady Delaunay, as she pointed out the emigrant's ocean route, and tried to render easier of comprehension why his winter was in June, and his hot weather at Christmas. In the midst of a graphic picture she was setting before them of the perils of the bush, such as they have been so often described—the endless labyrinth—the want of water—the robber lurking in wait—the slow, struggling death of exhaustion—there was a movement among her young listeners, that made her look round in some surprise at the interruption. Mrs. Herbert, with a face betraying much embarrassment and concern, was holding the door against some one without, whose sobbing voice could be heard repeating, 'It is too cruel! I *must* speak to her, and I will!' And as if to second the resolution, came a vehement push at the panels, that well nigh overcame the resistance of the gentle superintendent. All eyes turned in that direction.

'What is the matter?' asked Lady Delaunay, in a slight tone of displeasure.

'Indeed, madam, it is not with my consent, I assure you; it is quite against rules, but I do not know how to be as severe as I ought in a case like hers.'

The door was flung open before she could finish her sentence, and a young girl in the wildest excitement, her features swollen with crying, rushed in, and fell on her knees before Lady Delaunay, pouring out passionate entreaties, like a child in a paroxysm of grief and terror.

'Only forgive me once more—only once—and see if I do not improve! I will, I will, if I slave from morning till night to please you! Oh, Lady Delaunay, I don't know what will become of me if you cast me off—I am so miserable! Everybody tells me I am disgraced, and nobody will help me, or recommend me, because they say if *you* will not, I must be bad indeed—and what am I to do? I am not so bad as all that, and I am so very, very sorry. Oh! don't turn away from me!—you won't believe me, because I have said so before; but it is true, indeed! Oh, dear Mrs. Herbert, speak for me! Will none of you girls help me with

a word? Lilla Brittan—Mr. Powys—dear Mr. Powys, won't you ask her just to try me once more?'

The calm severity of Lady Delaunay's voice checked any inclination that might be arising to respond to this appeal. 'Mr. Powys has too much regard for me to subject me to the mortification of refusing him a request. My young friends *here*, however moved in their feelings, are better brought up than to presume to interfere in such a matter. Mrs. Herbert thinks with me, and knows as well as I do, that such an exhibition as this, would have been spared me by any one who had a correct sense of propriety. Stand up, Miss Unwin; you shock us all by your attitude—I desire you to rise this moment.'

'Not till you have heard me—not till you have forgiven me! Don't tell me you cannot! This house, and all in it, is your own; you have only to say the word, and oh! what a difference it would make to me, so miserable as I am! You should never, never have cause to be angry with me again; I will do anything, bear any punishment, do any work you like—only give me one more trial, dear Lady Delaunay! On my knees I ask, I implore you! I won't let you go without one word of hope; I can't, for if I do, I shall die, I know I shall!'

Her voice had become almost a scream, and it was frightful to see her writhe on the floor, as she clung round Lady Delaunay; who, finding it impossible to free herself without considerable effort, stood perfectly still and unmoved, waiting till she could be heard.

Nobody ventured to interfere; Mrs. Herbert kept her eyes on the ground; the girls huddled together in trembling excitement; Randolph, keenly attentive, watched the calm inexorable severity of the delicate features, and began to have some misgivings that Mr. Powys was not so far wrong. Mr. Powys himself, whose heart had melted directly he saw tears, though he had been as angry as anybody with the offender before, could not help muttering that a kind word would do no harm—the poor thing was sorry, and what more would you have?

A good deal more, if Lady Delaunay's face was to be understood. As soon as she felt, by the relaxing clutch, that the young lady was becoming calm enough to listen, she quietly but decidedly withdrew from her hold, and desired her once more to rise. This time she durst not disobey, and stood sobbing and wringing her hands, till the grave, commanding voice arrested her agitation:—'You have chosen to make this appeal, Miss Unwin, before so many witnesses, therefore before them I answer it; a pain I would otherwise have spared you. You came into this establishment, knowing its rules—you were placed in a position of trust, as being

older than many of your companions—you violated that trust, by not only breaking the rules yourself, but leading them to do the same. You were reprov'd for so doing, once—twice—and would then have suffered the penalty, but for your professions of amendment. The third time you resorted to falsehood and manœuvre to cover disobedience; and then you were expelled. Now you have felt the consequences, you would come back; and you hope to move me by this painful display of distress. You are mistaken. That you would find the result distressing, I was perfectly aware, and spared you while I could. Once resolved to punish, I *never* change my mind; and I am concerned to think that the discipline of this house is not strict enough to have protected me from exposure to such a scene. Silence! I will hear no more: one third of this vehemence, if employed in your own improvement, would have saved you all this humiliation. Now, leave the house—and do not presume to enter it again without express permission from me.

Crushed and cowering with the sense of shame and degradation, the unhappy girl turned to obey; but as she reached the door, a sudden reaction seemed to take place; she came back to the middle of the room almost at a bound—every evil passion at work in her features, and perfectly reckless what she said or did, or what might be the result.

‘Yes, I will go—and don’t be afraid of my asking you to forgive me again. I had heard before that you couldn’t forgive—not even your own flesh and blood—and now I believe it. If I can only manage, somehow, to scrape up enough to pay you back every penny I have cost you, I shan’t care for anything else; and I will, if I live. I won’t be in your debt longer than I can help, and I advise all who hear me to resolve the same!’

A fierce and bitter laugh, choked by a rush of scarcely more bitter tears—and she was gone. Several of the girls burst out crying as the door slammed after her, and Lady Delaunay, as she glanced round, met nothing but looks of consternation and regret. A slight flush on her cheek betrayed her resentment; she faced them steadily, and her lips quivered when she began to speak. ‘Children! I see you think me cruel. So be it. I am used to this, and not for your tears, nor for any suffering disobedience and temper may bring on that unhappy girl, will I go back a step from my determination. Bear this in mind when tempted yourselves. That I am slow to punish, some of you know already: that I punish in earnest when I punish at all, you may all know in future. No one is compelled to remain here a moment longer than she pleases, but while you do remain under my protection, I *will* be obeyed. I will detain you from your avocations no longer.

Perhaps, Mrs. Herbert, you would have the goodness to order the carriage round. Mr. Randolph,' turning to him while the girls were hurriedly leaving the room, 'I regret this should have occurred during your first visit. You may take a hint from it, if you will, that may be serviceable in your future plans.'

'I expect he will,' said Mr. Powys. 'He has learnt more from you in five minutes, than I could have made him believe in a month. Well, my dear sir, if it should occur to you that your schemes turn out harder to manage than you thought, remember my best assistance is at your disposal.'

Randolph grasped the offered hand. 'I take you at your word, sir. I see you know better than I, and shall be too glad of your co-operation.'

The significant squeeze Mr. Powys gave to his fingers was as significantly returned, not unobserved by Lady Delaunay.

'I question whether I should get such a shake of the hand if I asked for it, Mr. Randolph,' she said, with an attempt at a smile. 'If the truth were told, my kind pastor is very angry with me in his heart.'

'As to that, my dear lady,' said he, thrusting his hand into his hair till it stood on end, according to his custom when disturbed in his mind, 'we have long ago made the discovery that we do not always agree in opinion, and that neither of us likes to give up to the other; so the less we say about it the better.'

'You mean that I am wrong now?' her eye kindling, though her voice was calm. 'Say it honestly then; I can bear it.'

'But I can't, Lady Delaunay; I am never comfortable when we don't agree. Besides, I do not dispute your right to make what rules you please in your own house, and to enforce them when broken. I only mean I could not have stood out as you did——'

'And as I always will, my dear friend, when the good of the many is put in the scale with the feelings, or even the sufferings, of *one*.'

'Well, that is your method. I am for letting the ninety and nine take their chance, if I can bring back the hundredth.'

'Not if that lost sheep taint the others.'

'Oh, come, that is a hard word. I know she was very wrong, and I cannot imagine what put it into her head to look at the wretched books—then to show them to the younger ones, and tell lies to hide it—bad, bad, very bad. But she had had a good fright, and a good humbling, and it was just a toss-up whether she would really mend, or grow harder in self-will. She won't mend in a hurry *now*.'

'I am sorry for it; but a rule that has reason on its side, is worth nothing unless it is kept.'



'Better break fifty rules than one heart. Better lose all your credit for discipline than one chance of saving a soul.'

'Without discipline I can pretend to do nothing. When I have passed a sentence, I never recall it. Forgive my setting up my judgment in opposition to yours; in anything else I am too glad of your advice, but my conscience in this matter must be my guide alone. I am older than you by a sprinkling of winters, and may plead the experience of age in resisting pastoral authority.'

'Yes,' said he, with a smile and a grimace of impatience, 'I knew it *would* end in that, and I have no more to say; only remember *this*—the older we grow, the less time we have to forgive in, and if life's sun go down upon our wrath—'

She held out her hand, and pressed his earnestly.

'There is none between us, at any rate. And for the rest,' she murmured as she turned to depart, 'of those who inflict, and those who bear the chastening, it is hard to tell which suffers the most!'

She took Randolph's arm, apparently unconscious that he must have heard her words. Mr. Powys shrugged his shoulders, looked after her wistfully, and then perceiving that he was blocking up Lilla Brittan's way, gave her his arm too.

'What do you say to all this? You are growing quite a young woman now; I hope a wise one too.'

Miss Brittan's troubled conscience could suggest nothing wiser than a titter.

'Well, keep out of these scrapes, whatever you do; for, mind, it will be no use sending for me; I can't get you out of them. Take warning by that silly girl who has thrown away the best friend she ever had, or ever will have—do you hear?—and keep her while you have her.'

'But, Mr. Powys,' faltered Lilla; 'do you think for *one* fault, one little bit of disobedience, now I am not in the school, she would serve me like Belle Unwin?'

'Not if you told her yourself, of your own accord. That is the only chance. So remember, if you are ever unwise enough to do what she has forbidden—which, so long as you are under her generous guardianship, she has a right to do—run and own it directly. Good-bye.'

'Oh dear,' thought Lilla, as she got into the carriage, 'how very easy it is to talk!'

Perhaps Lady DeLaunay observed some traces of agitation in her features; for she looked at her very kindly, and ordered the coachman to drive round the Park. She herself, sunk in deep and painful thought, remained silent and abstracted for some time, till gradually roused by the increasing animation of the dialogue between her two companions.

*Randolph.*—‘And so that is what you call being a workwoman, Miss Brittan—one inch of calico per diem drilled into holes at regular distances—all the monotony of bean-setting without the prospect of the beans—honeycombing your material like the bees, but forgetting to store any honey in your cells! Call you that working?’

*Lilla.*—‘How absurd you are, Mr. Randolph! What can you know about it?’

*Randolph.*—‘Ah, I know more about ladies’ work than they like me to tell. They deal now in nothing but shams; imitation of old carving—imitation of old china—imitation of old lace; and the carving is made of old shoes and glue, and the china of old bottles and green paint, and the lace of whatever you please—but such as it is, our great-grandmothers would have scorned to put the best of it on the bachelor’s pincushion; much more on their own lappets and ruffles. Ah! if you could but see some that I have by me, you would fancy yourself back in the days of the long-peaked stomachers and hoops, and sacques, and brocade, and powder: that golden age when young ladies rose at six, made their own beds and the puddings of the family, sewed stout Irish linen instead of little round holes in cambric, and never spoke till they were spoken to, or came into a room without a curtsy to the company. Halcyon days! when will ye return?’

*Lilla.*—‘Not in my time, I hope. I hate early rising, and should never touch another pudding if I had to make it, nor anybody else either; and I must talk when I like, or not at all. But tell me about this lace—how did you get it, and why?’

*Randolph.*—‘That is rather a long story; have you patience to hear it?’

*Lilla.*—‘Oh, there is nothing I like so well. I would rather have the worst story than the most improving book of history you could name. I mean,’ colouring suddenly, ‘not the *worst* exactly, but what wise people call silly, and far-fetched, and all that sort of thing; which I hope yours is.’

*Randolph.*—‘Hem—well, not exactly as you say, though I agree in thinking many things that are interesting to some, would appear silly enough to others. My story, remember, is true.’

*Lilla.*—‘That is a great pity; but if it is not too sensible, it will not signify; only begin with, Once upon a time.’

‘Once upon a time, then,’ began Randolph, emphatically, ‘there were a mother and a daughter.’

Lady Delaunay turned her head so quickly as almost to throw him off his guard; but recovering himself in an instant, he proceeded as if nothing had occurred. He was an artful story-teller, and painted with considerable effect the series of scenes he laid

before them : the quiet village home left for the temptations of service, the temptations yielded to, the struggles of the unaided weakness, the punishment, the repentance, the refused pardon, the gradual downfall afterwards—to that moment when a miserable death seemed at hand, and a presence as of an angel's stood between the destroyer and the victim. His voice faltered here, as he went on to describe the tenderness, the compassion of that unnamed Samaritan ; the quiet resting-place in which, through her care, the wanderer was now sheltered, with bodily comforts and spiritual instruction within her reach, and no longer without hope, either for this world or the next ; and then when the interest of both listeners was firmly fixed, as much by his manner of telling it as by the story itself, he suddenly broke off with the query—‘ And how was all this to be paid for ? The lady is a widow of slender income, and had no long charity-purse at her disposal. So she gave what she had—some rare valuable old lace, that had been in her family a long time, and which she had hoarded as an heirloom ?—and as she would not allow of assistance in any other way, I was obliged to do, as ladies do at a benevolent bazaar of fancy-work, when they give half-a-crown in charity, and get a pen-wiper by way of certificate—I bought the lace, and her pensioners are supported on the money.’

‘ Oh, Lady Delaunay ! ’ cried Lilla, ‘ did you hear that ? Was it not being really generous ? ’

Lady Delaunay smiled a hearty assent. ‘ I could envy that noble sacrifice ; it is one I much doubt my being able to make myself.’

‘ Oh, but then your lace is so very, very beautiful. No one could bear to part with *that*. ’

‘ I believe I can safely challenge even Lady Delaunay to produce any more beautiful than mine,’ said Randolph.

She looked good-humouredly incredulous, as if pardoning the presumption of ignorance. The lace she alluded to had been long in her family, too, and was well-known and highly valuable. Granted ; but *this* was equal to the finest in the kingdom. His pertinacity amused, while it almost provoked her. Seeing was believing ; she must see and compare it herself before she could be brought to believe. Randolph asked nothing better.

‘ So confident am I in your judgment,’ he said, ‘ that I would stake the lace itself on the issue.’

‘ You would ? ’

‘ Willingly. What ? your ladyship doubts my sincerity ? I claim a fair trial and an open field. Will you accept the challenge ? ’

‘ Oh, do, do ! ’ cried Lilla, clapping her hands.

‘ Nay, I claim it as a right,’ persisted he ; ‘ for Lady Delaunay’s doubts impugn either my skill or my credit. In either case my reputation is libelled, Miss Brittan, and you are a witness of my

wrongs ; and if I am refused honourable satisfaction, I shall appeal to Ariel and his fifty nymphs. No lady will allow me a voice in a committee of dress, or trust me with a commission beyond a paper of pins. Extensive knowledge, world-wide experience, honeyed eloquence in the great cause, all will be in vain. I shall be set down among the crowd of know-nothings who are not worth taking into a shop, and every milliner's apprentice will laugh me to scorn.'

'A sad picture, indeed,' said Lady Delaunay ; 'and sooner than such gifts as yours should be lost, have your own way, by all means. Bring me your purchase, and if I do not think it equal to your report, I shall be happy to keep it.'

'But if it is, what will you do for me in return ?'

'What you please.'

'Miss Brittan, I am a made man ; that promise opens to me the treasures of Boabdil el Chico. Lady Delaunay, who never retracts her word, will give me whatever I ask. I feel an alarming covetousness taking possession of me ; my imagination expands like Alnaschar's ; woe is me if it mislead me in like manner ! I shall not rest till my fate is decided.'

'O, I hope you will win !' said Lilla laughing ; 'I only wish it was my wager ; I know what I should ask directly. But when will you settle it ? Have you the lace with you ?'

'Alas ! no ; it is miles away, at my old friend's parsonage.'

'Trust me, Mr. Randolph,' said Lady Delaunay, 'it is safest there ; you are throwing away the substance for the shadow ; and meanwhile, allow me to ask if you do not require a little assistance for the poor people you have been telling us of, either for the mother or the child ?'

'You are very good. Yes, we may be too thankful for your help, Lady Delaunay. Our difficulty just now is to find their friends, as her mother seems to have left her parish, and we have not yet been able to trace her.'

'Do you know the mother's name ?'

'Dalton.'

'Indeed ? There was, and doubtless still is, a respectable widow of that name at Apswell, in ———shire, where my son has some property, who settled there a few years ago, and whom I have frequently employed to distribute relief in my absence among the poor. The only objection to her was the almost morose gloom, that seemed inconsistent with an amount of piety I could not but believe to be sincere. I think I heard she had had a daughter, but I am not certain. There can be no harm in seeking her out, if you like to try.'

Randolph caught at the suggestion, and in searching for a card or letter on which to take down the address, pulled out, among

others, one of the packets he had brought from Bryanstone Square. Lilla Brittan's eyes grew round at the sight. Till that moment she had almost forgotten her instructions. She watched his movements breathlessly, saw him write on the back of a letter, and then, as untaught by experience, he thrust the whole hastily back into his pocket, saw, with a beating heart, Mrs. Marsden's parcel slide down unnoticed, first on the cushion, then on the rug at his feet. At that moment he looked up, and was struck with the eager expression of her face.

'You seem more interested in my story, Miss Brittan, than you gave me reason to suppose you would be.'

'Yes, of course I am,' said she, colouring.

'May I ask what you were thinking of just then so earnestly?'

'Thinking? oh yes. I was—I was thinking what a hard-hearted crab of an old woman that must be, not to receive her own child when she came out of prison.'

'Hard words, my dear,' said Lady Delaunay, mildly.

'Well, but Lady Delaunay, don't you think so yourself?'

'It is hard to judge, Lilla, without hearing both sides. A keen sense of disgrace and of the value of character is one of those cheap defences of the respectable poor, of which I should be sorry to speak lightly. It would be a heavy blow to have a child return to an honest home out of a jail; some parents could not bear it. What honour is to us, is their good name to them, and a stain on it is worse than death. Of course, the nature of the offence and the circumstances attending it, ought to be taken into consideration. In this case it seems to have been the offender's best, perhaps her only chance of permanent amendment, and her mother's fireside was her natural shelter.'

'And probably would have been,' said Randolph; 'had not her first wrong step been to disobey her mother.'

'Ah, poor thing! Does she repent?'

'Bitterly; she would give the world, were it hers, to win her pardon.'

'Then never let her despair; for real repentance—repentance for the fault, not regret at the penalty—repentance leading to humility, to change of conduct, to genuine submission and amendment—*nothing* is impossible.'

'You think so, Lady Delaunay?'

'I *know* it. You think, perhaps,' she added, with a slight smile, that veiled no little emotion; 'that because I am inexorable to clamorous appeals against punishment, I cannot appreciate the renovating principle of contrition. I can allow for your mistake, and pardon it. Rely upon this—and, in dealing with such cases, act accordingly—that it is not to true repentance and amendment that

any mother would shut her heart and ear. To see the rock give forth water, the stiff neck bend to the yoke, the brow that was of brass stooping in the dust of generous shame ;—for such a sight she would bear anything, do anything ; yes, gladly die !’

‘Is it then so rare ?’ asked Randolph, commanding himself with some difficulty.

‘So rare, that when found, it is treason against the universe to conceal or discourage it. Tell the mother this, if she prove to be the individual I have named to you. If she be indeed a religious woman, and yet remain indifferent to the news of her lost child’s penitence—news which should bring her to her side from the brink of the grave—then you must take up a high position, and warn her that in withholding the hope of improvement from a spirit that God has broken, she makes herself responsible—not only for the evil that spirit yet may do—but for the loss of the good it might have done !’

‘When I heard her speak thus,’ said Randolph, afterwards, in relating to his friend Emma what passed, ‘I felt if I remained a minute longer in her company, I should infallibly betray myself. There was an instant when I half resolved to run the risk ; but the next reminded me how little she was likely to be moved by a sudden impulse. I had seen pretty strong proof of that ; my presumptuous interference, unauthorized, possibly unsupported by subsequent events, might only deepen the evil I sought to remedy ; so perforce I held my tongue, and took my leave. So far, so good ; I have gained more than one step in advance, and begin to see my way.’

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### CHAPTER XIII.

Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides.—*Shakespeare.*

THE carriage stopped in Bryanstone Square to take up Miss Conway.

‘Go in, my dear,’ said Lady Delaunay, looking at her watch ; ‘and beg her to come directly. I am behind my time already.’

Miss Brittan hastened to obey, and met her friend on the stairs, just in time for a hurried whisper.

‘Well, my dear, what news ?’

‘Oh, Miss Conway, such a scene at the Home ! Poor Belle Unwin, who used to lend me books—I was so sorry for her ; but I never could face Lady Delaunay again if she knew all—never ! And yet she is so kind !’

‘Never mind that now ; where is Mr. Randolph ?’

‘Gone ; what an odd, charming, quizzing man he is ! I can’t make out whether he is making fun of me or not ; but there is not time now for half I have to say—I was to hurry you. Only look

out when you are in the carriage, for he let something drop you want to see.'

'Papers?'

'Yes—a little parcel. I would have got them for you if I had had courage, but I was afraid.'

'You dear little thing! Anything else?'

'Yes—I know where he comes from; I saw his address.'

'Her ladyship is waiting for Miss Conway,' said the footman, appearing at the bottom of the stairs.

'Thank you; I am coming this moment. Good-bye, my dear Lilla,' shaking her by the hand, and whispering, 'What place was it?'

'Rectory—Cannymoor.'

'No!'

'Yes, indeed; near Shareham. Why?—who lives there?'

'Cannymoor?' repeated Miss Conway to herself, as she walked slowly to the carriage; 'Cannymoor—so soon after his return—as if *that* could be his object? And come to us direct from meeting her; what can it mean?—what is it he intends to do?'

There is a way of spending life, described with caustic power by the poet, as

Dropping buckets into empty wells,  
And growing old in drawing nothing up.

Miss Conway's case was not exactly this; and yet it resembled it. She was wise enough in her generation; chose good machinery, long ropes, windlasses in excellent repair, not a hoop or a stave out of its place, and best of all, good water and plenty of it. By this means she seldom brought up a bucket quite empty, but at the same it never came full. Some tremor of the hand, some jerk of the cord, some unlucky jolt midway, always interposed between her wishes and completion; and what actually passed over the well's brink lost its zest from the recollection of what had been spilled on the way.

She had been dropping buckets all her life, and she was dropping them still; and the next was always to be that complete draught that would satisfy—but it had not landed yet.

From childhood she had been a schemer; had manœuvred for treats in the nursery and admiration in the drawing-room; finessed over lessons at home, and at school became a diplomatist in grain, who managed her teachers with one hand, and her companions with the other, and was in turn dreaded by them all. No one knew exactly *how*, but Charlotte Conway's influence and friendship always seemed to benefit herself at the expense of her friend: and pleasant and clever as she was acknowledged to be, many a worse temper and duller intellect made a more agreeable companion.

Every now and then, some little thing would come out, some twisting of evidence, some inaccurate repetition, some shortness of memory, that could not be exactly convicted as false witness, and yet answered the same purpose; a story, told by her, generally bore quite a different meaning from its original one; and though, in the onset, she might be scrupulous in altering words as well as emphasis, the next step was too easy not to be taken, sooner or later.

Brought up with expensive tastes, as if certain to inherit a considerable fortune, she was early left unprovided for. The prospect of General Conway's noble succession had appeared to her father excuse enough for wasting the whole of his patrimony; and he had little to bequeath his daughter but brilliant expectations. Nothing could have had a stronger tendency to develop her ruling passion; and when, after her mother's death, she went to find a home under the hospitable roof of her wealthy great-uncle, it was with the fixed determination of being his heiress. Into this well of promise her bucket dropped with all the skill she could command, and it soon ceased to be a question in her own mind whether success was *probable*—she had begun to consider it her *right*. Mrs. Marsden would be amply provided for with an annuity, and what more could she want? Besides, the general's life was as good as hers, any day. She had saved money herself, too, no doubt; it would not do to neglect any kind and considerate attentions that could make her declining years easier—oh no!

So,

Round about her right hand,  
And round about her left,  
She wound the thread so fine.

And everybody said what a treasure she must be to them both.

All this is nothing new; it is what people are doing every day. Yes, but then it is rather awkward to be found out; and the very people who would do the same themselves, are sure to be the first to cry 'Shame!'

She had long been convinced—indeed, ever since the opening of his will—that her kind old protector had been set against her; a measure which, when practised upon herself, was not to be deprecated too severely. Circumstances now returned to her recollection as she retraced them, one by one, which might, which it seemed probable *must*, account for this, as well as for the grievous disappointment from which she had never recovered.

It is a well-known and a remarkable fact, that there is hardly any one, however keenly alive to his own interest in every purpose and action, who does not, at some period, and in some degree or other, believe in the disinterested regard of somebody else. Even Miss Conway, as free from weaknesses of this sort as most people,



had once been under the impression that she, who gave nothing for nothing, had a friend in one of her old schoolfellows, who loved her for herself alone. In this friend she confided, as she would have been too wary to do with any one else; and her finest webs of policy, as fast as they were spun, came under her cognizance, and were submitted for her approval. For years they kept up this unreserved correspondence, and her friend was assured, again and again, how much Miss Conway's brilliant prospects were ultimately to be for her advantage. At the time, these promises were sincerely made; Miss Conway really did anticipate the gratification of rewarding this flattering and disinterested attachment. But in the interim, the confidante began to feel, with Harpagon, that it was necessary to '*toucher quelque chose*;' and sundry urgent applications for interest, introductions, and at last, for pecuniary assistance, gradually led to a coolness between the fair writers; soon, as is usual in such cases, growing into deep, though unacknowledged enmity. A few months before his death, some family stories, which he believed never to have transpired beyond it, came round again to the general's ears, garbled and distorted in their passage, and causing him no small annoyance. They were traced, with others of a similar character, to the disinterested friend; who, when pressed to give up her authority, scrupled not to name Miss Conway. The general indignantly applied to his niece, who as indignantly refuted the charge; employing a great deal of skilful reasoning to convince him of her own entire innocence, and the utter worthlessness of the source whence the accusation proceeded. As he appeared convinced, the matter ended, with no further result than a complete rupture between herself and her former ally—then on the point of marriage with a gentleman in a diplomatic situation abroad.

Within the year, General Conway died, and it was found that he had made a new will only a short time before. His private papers, being all taken possession of by Mrs. Marsden, his sole executrix, according to his express desire, no one could account for this sudden change of purpose; except by whispering, as friends would among themselves, that dear Charlotte's acuteness was sometimes apt to overshoot its mark, and that no one would have given old Mrs. Marsden credit for being half so clever.

Lady Delaunay, who, in common with her son and daughter, inherited a small portion of her uncle's property, never made any comment, or expressed any surprise. She had always been on friendly terms with her cousin, and maintained them; if she ever betrayed any symptoms of being hurt by the arrangements of the will, it was by her complete acquiescence therein. She would neither interfere, advise, nor assist in a single measure, without

urgent solicitation ; and redoubled her former kindnesses to Miss Conway, insisting on her house being her home. It was by tacit agreement a forbidden topic of discussion ; but Miss Conway had the comfort of knowing her aunt thought her ill-used, and of at once commencing a new tissue of the manœuvre and diplomacy, that had become an essential part of her existence. Unawares, alike to mother and son, from the time she became an intimate associate of both, a barrier to unrestrained confidence crept up between them ; and the stronger grew her influence, the more frequently did she become the medium through which they held communication. The result of this was, that attached as he was to his mother, and regarding his cousin as an elder sister, Lord Delaunay was never happy at home, and always yielding to the propensities of his desultory nature to go anywhere for a new project, or an escape from business and mysteries. There seemed to be so many subjects he was not to allude to—so many things he was not to say, do, or deny, for fear of his mother's nerves or health—that he had got into the habit of saying as little to her as he could ; while she, on the other hand, feeling, yet not owning to herself the estrangement, scrupulously refrained from any assumption of authority, or from the expression even of a wish, that might appear to encroach on his liberty. To know that he neglected his affairs, postponed his duties, and wasted the greater part of his income, was one of the trials she felt more keenly, that every year was making her more sensible of the responsibilities of stewardship ; but it had been skilfully insinuated that he was pained by an interference that left him, from respect for her wishes, no choice ; and she preferred any disappointment to the risk of wearing out his affection.

Everything seemed to favour Miss Conway's designs. She was on the most deferential terms of tenderness with old Mrs. Marsden—her aunt's attachment was warm and frank—her cousin had the highest opinion of her judgment and good intentions, and many a brilliant day-dream had she cherished of the manner in which they would, amongst them, repair the cruel injustice of her great-uncle. One object of dread alone loomed in the distance, and forbade her to rest ; for in its train she recognized but too surely, detection, exposure, failure, and shame. To keep up the incessant watchfulness necessary to ward off this ever-impending evil, involved a strain of nerves and a wrestling with conscience, that made her life a torment : the rather that she had all the while to maintain a calm and smiling exterior.

This *bête noire* of her imagination was her banished cousin Adelaide ; and when Lord Delaunay, in his disappointment and chagrin, confessed the step he had taken in defiance of her advice,

and she found how very near the dreaded reconciliation had been,—her dismay partook of the nature of that with which Napoleon heard of the conspiracy of Malet. And scarcely had she recovered from this alarm, when a new one opened suddenly before her, in a quarter where it was least expected. What could those papers be that had disturbed her uncle's dying thoughts?—and what had taken Maurice Randolph to Cannymoor?

She would have given the world to have been alone in the carriage for five minutes. It was maddening to know that the means of solving one, at least, of these problems, was literally at her feet, and yet not be able to make it her own. Several times she tried, but nowhere could she feel anything like a parcel of any kind; and the dread of attracting her aunt's notice at last made her abandon the attempt, trusting that her maid, well trained and long practised in the diplomacies of secret service, would be more skilful, or more fortunate than herself.

The other question brought with it a train of thoughts still more exciting; reaching back across bygone years, and waking up the old agony that had seemed then too much to bear. That scene described by Randolph to Henry and Emma, himself unconscious at the time of any suffering but his own, was present with her now as if it had just occurred; and the bitterness of soul with which she had learned that her worst fear was a reality, and her fondest hope a dream, had lost but little of its intensity by time and change. Still less had her thirst for revenge. What she felt from that hour for her fair and gifted rival, was more than a mere womanly jealousy; it was a fixed, inexorable hate, that could bide its time, and veil its face in smiles; but never flinch, or deviate, or soften. And now the bare possibility, that he who had fled on that terrible day of discovery, stung with the sense of scorn and wrong, to seek forgetfulness in distance and peril, should have returned in milder mood, to forgive—to pity—perhaps to win—sent the hot blood rushing to her brain, till every nerve throbbed with anguish. If the weight of that bold, vigorous intellect and energy were to be thrown in the scale in Adelaide's behalf, who could tell what might be the result? She sickened at the sight of the danger before her. She was forced to repeat to herself again and again, how unlikely it was—how altered they both were—how fickle were men in their first attachments—how little Adelaide was humbled by adversity; so that it was most probable, if they had met at all, it had been on hostile terms—before she could calm herself sufficiently to decide what had best be done. By this time they were at home; the carriage door was opened—she would have one moment, at least, for a hasty search, while her aunt alighted, and then—but Lady Delaunay was collecting some books and other articles lying about

on the cushions, and in the pockets, and requested her to descend first. The instant she did so, she heard that some intimate friends, passing through town, were waiting in the house to see them ; and was compelled to hurry in, with every appearance of eager joy. These visitors stayed so long, it was full two hours before she was able to communicate with her maid. That astute personage, who took a hint as readily as most people, did her best to make up for lost time, but to no purpose ; the carriage was put away, the coachman gone home ; no one had seen or heard anything particular ; whatever parcels or books there were, had been no doubt collected by Mr. Anderson, the butler, as he handed his lady out, and carried up by him to her private sitting-room. As to asking questions of Mr. Anderson, one might as well go to my lady at once ; so the baffled envoy returned to report progress, and await fresh orders, which her mistress knew not how to give. She, in turn, waited to hear if any remark was made on the subject, and more than once brought the conversation round to it as nearly as she durst ; but nothing transpired, and she was obliged at last, to conclude that her informant had been mistaken.

Was she equally so on the other question ? That still remained a problem, which Miss Conway passed several hours in revolving in every point of view. The resolution she came to, after very serious meditation, was, that it could do no harm ‘to drop Adelaide a line ;’ and a line was dropped accordingly, as none but herself could drop it. It began by telling her what she was sure her cousin would be glad to hear—that dear Delaunay was gone away from London smoke and British east winds, to enjoy the mild early spring of the Continent ; and they need not expect him back till he was tired of sunshine, which would not be soon. Whereabouts he might be at any time, he never could say, so there was little or no trouble in corresponding with him.

‘I suppose it can hardly be a surprise to you,’ the letter proceeded, ‘to hear we have had a visitor, in the shape of an old acquaintance with a new face, as well as a new name—Mr. Maurice Randolph, *ci-devant* Gray. I speak doubtfully, as it was only by accident I learned he had been lately in your immediate neighbourhood ; he carefully avoided mentioning the circumstance, which, I must own, appears to me a little suspicious. There may be good reasons, no doubt, for all this mystery. Time and events may have altered your views of life, in which case I should be the last to think you to blame. He is now in the enjoyment of a good fortune, and rather improved than otherwise by the lapse of years. You know I always thought you treated him ill, and I still retain the high opinion I had of his honour and generosity, so that I do not think you could have a kinder protector. Situated as you are,

you will scarcely be justified in throwing away such an advantage for your little boy, even in the beaten way of friendship—supposing it to lead to nothing more. I will not be impertinently curious; but he was always very susceptible of pity, and pity, we know, is akin to that which we must not name. I feel I am making you angry; so, my dear, while you are wisely agreeing to forgive each other, be magnanimous, and forgive me too.’

Short and decided came the answer, as if to a cartel of defiance.

‘I am at a loss to understand your meaning. There is no reason on earth why Mr. Randolph should make a mystery of our having met—first, as strangers, and since, as ordinary acquaintance. Were it not that I cannot believe you would jest with me in so heartless a manner, I should have great difficulty in receiving your remarks as serious. If they are so, understand this, at once, and for ever. My circumstances may have altered my opinion of individuals, from showing me human nature undisguised; but what you term my views of life, as far as they relate to what is due to myself and others, remain the same. I can pardon—I *have* pardoned, affront and injury—where I could not pardon myself, should I stoop to an obligation. I do not dispute his honour or his generosity; but I must be fallen indeed when I accept their protection. Your kind anxiety in our behalf has misled you; there are means of providing for my boy’s wants without sacrificing his dignity or mine.’

A smile played round Miss Conway’s lips as she read these lines—every sentence bearing testimony to the indignant excitement in which they were written. ‘It is a singular thing,’ she thought, as she carefully folded up the letter, and put it aside, ‘but no one would suppose how much cleverer Adelaide really is than I am.’

She was busy at her writing-desk a few hours later, when she was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Delaunay, her face full of perplexity and her hands full of letters.

‘I want your assistance, my dear Charlotte, in some business matters here, which Delaunay has left all in confusion, and which I am at a loss how to arrange. Perhaps your memory can come to my aid. It relates to that farm at Oakside, which the general left him. There is a question mooted about the lease, and the tenant pleads a verbal promise of renewal, but has no witness or writing to show; and Delaunay’s agent has had several advantageous offers, of which he argues his lordship ought to have the benefit. Now, as I have no right, whatever may be my inclination, to get the credit of liberality at my son’s expense, without being sure that it is a case for anything but justice, that justice is what I want to ascertain. I thought you might, perhaps, recall something of the circumstance.’

'If I cannot,' said Miss Conway, after considering a moment, 'I think I know who can.'

'Who, my dear?'

'Mr. Randolph. He knew all my poor uncle's affairs: everything passed through his hands.'

'Indeed? I am glad I consulted you. Where is his card? I only hope he has not left town, as we have not seen him lately.'

'Oh, no; he called in Bryanstone Square yesterday, and was afraid he should be detained in London some time longer: he had found so much business waiting for him to attend to. There was some joke, too, about a wager with you: I suppose that was only Lilla Brittan's nonsense.'

'You thought me incapable of such an indecorum?' said Lady Delaunay, smiling, as she took her niece's proffered seat and began her note. 'But we have a grand precedent—remember Maria Theresa's wager, and Metastasio's elegant compliment. There, I have invited your clever friend to dinner; and as I go by presently, I will persuade Mr. Powys to meet him, and make my peace in that quarter—for the twentieth time.'

Randolph accepted the invitation, which was, indeed, so worded, it would have been an affront to do otherwise. The party was small, but agreeable: Mr. Powys had recovered his good-humour—Lady Delaunay was all cordiality and kindness—there were two or three other guests, all sensible, well-bred, and pleasant, with the exception, perhaps, of one young man, a cousin of the Earl's, who might have been all three, if he had not considered his share of the hereditary beauty of the Chesters sufficient exemption from the duties of society. He had, unhappily, imbibed the idea—on what logical principles it would be hard to say—that because a cavalry officer with a distinguished moustache, it was incumbent on him to take five minutes to bring out as many words; keeping his eyes half shut the while, as if the honour of his regiment depended on the display of his long eyelashes.

He had observed Maurice some time with languid curiosity, before he took the trouble of remarking to his neighbour, Miss Conway, with his usual deliberation, 'Amazingly well informed, that friend of yours. He is the Wandering Jew, I think you said.'

'I think not,' said Miss Conway, laughing.

'No?—really? I made sure it was the Wandering Jew. My aunt knows everybody, and one has never seen him anywhere before. Where did you pick him up?'

'How you speak of our guests, Captain Chester! He is a man of good family, I can tell you, and better fortune than your own.'

'That he may easily be. I wish he would adopt me—he looks

old enough to be my grandfather—I dare say he would. I will win his heart by pretending to take him for a military man. If he is the Wandering Jew, he will tell us the last news of the battle of Hastings.'

'Pray mind what you are doing,' remonstrated Miss Conway. 'He is not a man to put up with an affront, I assure you.'

'Affront him? He will be delighted. Nothing charms a man with a moustache like taking him for a lieutenant-colonel.' And availing himself of a pause in the conversation, Captain Chester leaned forward, to ask Randolph with a smile, if he had seen much active service?

Something in the smile, as well as in the tone, made Maurice's blood tingle, he knew not why. 'If you mean military service, sir, I have never had the honour to serve at all.'

'Oh, indeed! I beg your pardon,' returned Captain Chester, with another marked smile, and he leaned back in his chair, as if satisfied.

'People have their own ideas on the subject of active service,' said Lady Delaunay, pleasantly. 'I do not know what Fitzroy's may be, representing as he does, the gallant ——th; but if Mr. Randolph's is to be considered passive, I should like to see his ideal of activity.'

Then by a few well-put questions, she gradually drew him into giving an account of an expedition in which he had been a sharer, in search of one of the buried cities of Central America, and which, owing to various unforeseen circumstances, proved one of no small peril and hardship. The interest of the company was excited; his brief, cursory sketch would not satisfy them; they pressed for details and particulars, and reluctant as he was to set himself up as a hero in that presence, enough transpired to raise him in everybody's opinion, as well as to excite their sympathy. Captain Chester alone sat sipping his wine, and smiling to himself occasionally; and when reproached by Miss Conway for being half asleep, protested he meant no offence to anybody.

'It was my mistake; I thought it was the Wandering Jew, and I find it is only Pizarro, or what's his name, who carries off the child, and gets peppered going over the practicable bridge O. P. It's all the same. Excuse me, Miss Conway, but nothing fatigues me like hearing where people have been. I never ask, and I never want to know. Delaunay and I met in a railway carriage last year, and sat together all day; and we never told each other a word of what we had been doing, though we came, I believe, from different ends of the world. The only way to make travelling tolerable, is to make it a rule never to talk about it.'

'And if you are asked where you come from?'

‘I say I don’t know. Upon my life, it is as often the case as not.’

‘That is not exactly Delaunay’s: his weakness is, that he never knows where he is going.’

‘And he is quite right. Nothing can be more tiring. I get into the first conveyance that happens to come in my way, and go to sleep: and when I wake up, I am sure to be somewhere. It is all the same. All places are pretty much alike. Where is Delaunay now?’

‘He talked of being in Paris at Easter: meanwhile he is going through Normandy, I believe.’

‘Well, perhaps I shall meet him. I am going abroad myself—I want change.’

‘I think you do. *Any* change will be an improvement!’

‘Do you know, you are quite severe; you are, upon my honour. I shall tell Delaunay you keep too clever company for me now. Your friend is the Continental Bradshaw, is he not?’

‘You will soon find out what he is, if you do not take care.’

When the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room, Lady Delaunay found an opportunity of drawing Mr. Randolph aside, and with brief but sincere apologies, laying before him the matter she had on hand. To her great relief, he recollected the circumstance at once.

‘I was present,’ he said, ‘when the promise of renewal was made, and I remember the general telling me, at the time, some of the reasons that made him give it. The tenant had sunk a considerable sum in improving the land, had worked hard all his life, and his father before him, without indulging in the expenses and luxuries adopted by many of his class; and in every respect had a claim on the liberality of his landlord. I am nearly sure there was a special mention of him in a codicil of his will.’

‘Not of his *last* will,’ said Lady Delaunay, shaking her head. ‘His former one, whatever it might be, was destroyed a short time before his death.’

‘So I have understood; and if it was remodelled in haste, he doubtless forgot this poor fellow altogether. But at any rate, I am positive of his *intention*, and I believe, among my old papers, I could find a memorandum of the very day. I was in the habit of keeping a diary, for the general’s benefit, as well as my own.’

‘You would do me a great favour, Mr. Randolph,’ said Lady Delaunay, after a slight hesitation, ‘if you could produce any evidence that could be laid before my son. He is rather prejudiced against this tenant, as being old-fashioned, and averse to modern improvements (though by your account diligent in making the most of the land), and his agent has endeavoured to dissuade him from



the renewal ; but to be assured of the general's promise, and of the good reasons for giving it, would, I am confident, settle the matter. I am unwilling to interfere personally ; besides, we unfortunate women of business, in our dread of responsibility, are apt to go on puzzling our brains over imaginary difficulties, where a man's clear sense would arrange it all in five minutes. To come to the point—if you could only explain the case yourself to Lord Delaunay, you would be doing us a real kindness.'

Randolph expressed his readiness with a warmth that gratified her. 'You see, my dear sir,' she said, with a smile that made his heart throb, from its likeness to her daughter's, 'the more I inquire, the more evidence I find of the warm esteem and confidence with which my dear uncle regarded you ; and whether I will or not, I must treat you as an old family friend, instead of an acquaintance of a few days.'

He took her offered hand with the deepest respect. 'If you wish me to feel sure, dear madam, that this is more than a gratifying compliment, you will allow me to be actively employed in your service. If it will relieve you from anxiety, I will go after Lord Delaunay as soon as you please, and explain the matter. I am so accustomed to be on the move, a hundred miles more or less is nothing. Where is he to be found ?'

'That I cannot exactly tell you, but I take your friendly offer as it is meant ; and if, as I have reason to fear, my son continues to postpone his return'—she sighed unawares as she spoke, 'I may be too glad to avail myself of it. I will wait till I know something decided about his movements, and let you know. You see I take you at your word.'

'You honour me by selecting me to do you service. I will do my best to merit your confidence. Of that which the general reposed in me, I have lately received a most unexpected proof through Mrs. Marsden.'

'Indeed?' said Lady Delaunay, with a slight change of countenance.

'Yes ; it appears that General Conway, on his death-bed, expressed a wish that certain papers should be examined by me. Mrs. Marsden, not knowing where I was, adhered to the letter of her instructions, kept them by her, unopened, and, I imagine, forgot them—till my call reminded her of their existence and she put them into my hands. I have not examined them yet ; and as they seem to be principally private letters, I wish to know if I have authority to do so ; whether there may not have been some misapprehension of his meaning, and whether it would not be more satisfactory if they were opened in your presence ?'

'By no means, Mr. Randolph,' interrupted Lady Delaunay

gently, but decidedly, a slight flush playing on her cheek for a moment. 'That there *has* been misunderstanding somewhere, I do not pretend to ignore ; but I have no doubt of the clearness of my uncle's mind at the last, and his wishes are sacred to us all. If he named you for that service, it was with some good reason ; and you will be serving us all, if you simply comply with his last request. When you have done so, Mrs. Marsden will act as she thinks proper. She has her own conception of the duties of an executrix,' she added, with her previous sweet smile, as if to remove any impression of hauteur, 'and this is a specimen ; but, as you say, they were no doubt forgotten.'

He bowed in silence ; and the claims of her other guests compelled her to close the conversation. Miss Conway, who had been watching them from a distance, was considering how to win the now disengaged visitor over to her side of the room, when she observed Captain Chester go leisurely up to him, with the manifest purpose of becoming better acquainted. Prescient of danger, she at once began to manœuvre in that direction ; but detained by passing obstacles, lost the opening of the conversation, and with it, the fund of useful information the hussar was imparting from the low easy-chair into which he had dropped—as to *who* was the only bootmaker in London that it was possible for a gentleman to employ.

'I see you have had a long discussion with my aunt, Mr. Randolph,' said Miss Conway, ruthlessly snapping the thread of his eloquence. 'Can you assist her ?'

'I trust so ; I am no lawyer, but I think I can make this clear.'

'I might have been sure of that ; there never *was* anything you could not do if you chose.'

'No, really, is that the case ?' said Captain Chester. 'Quite an Admirable what's-his-name. How charming ! I wish I was. I can never do anything I choose, by any chance. But if my aunt has business to do, why doesn't she go to law ? Were you ever fortunate enough to go to law, Mr. Randolph ?'

Randolph had not had that distinction, and was not particularly anxious for it.

'Then, pardon me, but you never made a greater mistake. It is the finest thing in the world—quite worth the risk, and expense, and all that, for the sake of the fund of entertainment. Upon my honour, I think it saved my life last year. I was just dying by inches of sheer dulness—sick of everything—bored into a low fever—and some rogue was good enough to cheat me out of a lot of money, and we had to fight it out in the courts. Upon my word, it was better than a play—plays are the greatest bores under the sun ; and this had all the fun of a match, going on for months. It was new life to me ; I advise you to try it.'

‘Thank you ; it is worth knowing. Did you recover your money ?’

I really forget. Yes—I suppose I got some. The betting was heavy against me, as the other side had a big-wig of a lawyer ; but I would back mine against the whole field ; and I only wish somebody would bring an action against me to-morrow—upon my life, I do. If ever you want a lawyer, pray don’t forget to secure mine—the coolest hand—the most wide-awake dog—what *is* he called ? I have the most wretched memory in the world—where is it, Miss Conway, that what’s-his-name is always “rolling rapidly” ?’

‘Do you mean, “On Linden, when the sun was low——” ?’

‘Lyndon ! thank you ! that’s the man ; Henry Lyndon ! Why, what’s the matter ? Is he not to be mentioned ? Oh, ah, I forgot ; he is a sort of connexion of ours, isn’t he ? I never thought of that ; upon my life, I’ll try and plead nearness of kin with him, and get him to consider it in his bill. He is a monstrous clever fellow. Pray mention my name to him, Mr. Randolph, and I will answer for his showing you every attention.’

‘Thank you ; the next time I see my friend Mr. Lyndon, I will mention your name with pleasure.’

Miss Conway started and turned pale. The captain opened his handsome eyes for a momentary stare of wonder, then subsided again with his favourite phrase. ‘It is all the same, he is an amazingly clever fellow. I must get my aunt to ask him here, Miss Conway. No ? won’t that *do* ? By-the-by, what is become of our fair cousin ? She may be dead and buried for all one hears of her. I have half a mind to hunt her up.’

Nobody answered, but Mr. Randolph’s white teeth flashed for a moment through his moustache, and his fingers clenched, whether he would or not. He caught Miss Conway’s eye, watching him with a painful eagerness, in which there was something sinister he had never seen before. He returned the look with one before which she quailed, her heart beating fast with undefined fear. She turned to find safety in increased numbers, and Mr. Powys being nearest at hand, was easily drawn into the group. A discussion had been going on between him and one of the gentlemen, respecting some copies of inscriptions lying on the table ; and Miss Conway gladly saw Mr. Randolph become interested in it, and took a part herself, with considerable spirit. From inscriptions ancient, they came down to handwriting modern, and the characteristics of different periods and people. Miss Conway fetched a volume of autographs, in illustration of the subject ; and Mr. Powys told some wonderful stories of a friend of his who possessed the much-disputed art of reading character from handwriting. The audience testifying much incredulity, he tried to exhibit a little of the science himself, and failed signally ; then the others must needs try their skill.

Miss Conway was urgent upon Randolph to make the attempt, to justify her report of his universal powers; and opening a letter-case, produced a handful of what she called dead letters—formal notes of invitation, inquiry, and other civilities, which she begged him to examine deliberately, and write his verdict on each. There had arisen a request for music, and she was obliged to leave him to his task, while attending one of her visitors to the piano.

Little did the gentle lady by whose side she stood, to all appearance entranced by her delicate rendering of one of Mozart's loveliest melodies, imagine the fierce rate at which her pulse was beating, in the struggle to keep herself from looking back. The deep-drawn sigh of suppressed agitation seemed but the natural effect of sweet music sweetly played, and was accepted as the most agreeable compliment a performer can receive. When the piece was finished, Miss Conway was called on in turn, and with unflinching resolution complied; played and sang whatever was asked for; and not till her duty had been thoroughly accomplished, did she give a single glance at the other end of the room.

There was that in his attitude that made her go to him at once. With a hurried air, though as if laughing at her own nervousness, she begged permission to look over the letters she had given him, as it had just occurred to her they might have got mixed with some others. He suffered her to do as she pleased, only dropped his left hand from the table to his knee, where it remained clenched, as if he were suppressing the expression of pain. She was soon satisfied, and apologized for the interruption, complimenting him on his studious and abstracted air.

'It is quite refreshing to see any one take up a new pursuit so heartily. Have you discovered any startling revelations of character yet?'

'No,' said he, quietly, 'only a confirmation of what I had surmised before.'

She looked at him keenly, read the fierce passion working beneath the composed exterior, and glided away, satisfied for the present. A minute afterwards, Randolph, hearing a gentle yawn behind him, looked round, and saw Captain Chester leaning on the back of his chair. He nodded as he met Maurice's somewhat angry glance, observing that it was the neatest thing he had seen for an age.

'What do you mean, sir?' asked Maurice, sharply enough.

'No, don't pretend to be modest; it does you infinite credit. I should not have detected it myself, only I happen to know the trick, for it cost me a guinea. Should you object to show me your left hand for a minute?'

Randolph did so, very coolly. It was empty. Captain Chester's

face actually expanded with admiration. 'Now, how *did* you manage that? Upon my honour, that was good! I bet you ten to one, you don't do it again!'

'Perhaps not,' said Randolph, drily, 'though I am afraid you must take another lesson or two before you become a conjuror. But there is one thing I shall be happy to teach you on more moderate terms, as it is essential for you to know.'

'What may that be, pray, sir?'

'That I leave to your own sagacity to find out,' said Randolph, and he walked away. Before Captain Chester had recovered his presence of mind, he was half way down the street, arm-in-arm with Mr. Powys.

The gallant hussar, who had meant to tease, but not to quarrel (it being one of his lazy delights to irritate anybody whose blood was hotter than his own, but not to commit the solecism of a squabble in a drawing-room), felt a little perplexed by this method of treatment. He had been longing all the evening to put the stranger into a passion; but he had an unpleasant feeling that somehow he had contrived to get the best of it. 'Hang the fellow!' he thought to himself, at last; 'I almost believe he meant to be rude. Upon my honour, I won't stand it, if he did, and I'll tell him so.'

But happily it was too late, for that time at any rate.

'I have thought a good deal,' said Mr. Powys, as they walked along, 'of what you represented to me that day I had the pleasure of being introduced to you at the Home. I am ready to confess it was a rebuke I deserved. No, do not apologize, or explain; it was a friendly act. The fact is, we are very apt to let our educated people go their own way, and hesitate to interfere, where, in the case of a poorer one, we should volunteer advice and admonition. The rules of society may have something to do with it, but so it is. I had no idea at the time how intimately you knew the family, or at least some members of it. I myself have only been on these sociable terms within the last few years: at the time that unhappy breach took place, I had not been very long in the parish, and our acquaintance was confined to official and ceremonious civility. I have been inquiring since I saw you of those who knew the circumstances of the case, and by all accounts it appears that this poor young lady has been very easily given up by her friends. Without palliating either the sin of filial disobedience, or the imprudence (to say the least of it) of a clandestine marriage, still as there was nothing disgraceful or derogatory in the connexion with a brave young officer, who died in his country's service, it does seem severe treatment to cut her off as they have done. At

the same time, anything like an authorized interference would do more harm than good—don't you see? If I went to my kind friend and parishioner, and said, "My dear good lady, you are very wrong, and it is my duty to tell you so—" the answer I should get would be a very gracious acknowledgment of my excellent intentions, and a remark that I had done my duty, and I must not blame her for doing hers.'

He had talked himself quite into a heat, and stopped here to take his hat off, and dash his hand briskly through his crisp grey hair. Randolph remained silent, waiting for what should come next.

'Well, sir,' continued Mr. Powys, putting on his hat again, and resuming his active stride, that was fully a match for that of his athletic companion, 'what I was going to say, was this—I am ready and willing to do my part—any part, that will become my office, and not make mischief; but if you, as an old friend of the family, are really setting yourself to put matters to rights, I would advise you to begin by securing the Earl. He is the proper person, and as kind-hearted a man as breathes; only, between ourselves, you must deal with him face to face. Letters he as often leaves unopened as not, or if he opens, does not heed them, and the last reasoner carries the most weight. He has great influence over his mother, or would have, if he chose to exert it. She is passionately attached to him, and one of the great objects of her life seems to be to supply his deficiencies, without infringing on his dignity. Were Lord Delaunay to walk into his mother's room with his sister on his arm, and say he had brought her home, I have not the slightest doubt that her mother would bid her welcome. I only wonder he did not do it long ago.'

'Let me do him justice in one instance, at any rate,' cried Randolph, 'especially as it may account to you for my personal interest in the matter.' And in as few words as possible he explained the whole story of the abstracted letter. His companion listened with much interest, and refrained, with difficulty, from reproaching him with carelessness. The point that seemed to strike him most, was the evident, though guarded hostility of Miss Conway. They talked the whole case over, and agreed that the safest plan would be for Randolph to avail himself of Lady Delaunay's business as an introduction, and so obtain an opportunity of explaining the accident to the Earl; this would enable him to judge how he felt disposed towards his sister.

'It craves wary walking,' said Mr. Powys; 'for they are a high-spirited race, more accustomed to give than to receive; and in the very attempt to do disinterested service, one may give mortal offence when one least expects it.'

‘I am disposed to take my chance of that,’ said Randolph.

‘Well, that is right, and they will be grateful to you in the end, no doubt, if you succeed. I do not want to damp your chivalrous zeal, but you must be prepared for a few difficulties. ‘Meanwhile,’ added Mr. Powys, as he stopped to shake hands and part, ‘you have this old-fashioned, often-tested recompense to encourage perseverance—“*Blessed are the peace-makers.*” Good night.’

The words were kindly meant and sincerely spoken, but in Randolph’s frame of mind they sounded but a bitter irony; and could the warm-hearted clergyman have seen the curl of his lip as he turned away, he would have doubted the blessedness of any peace made with so wild a war within.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

Une femme douce et sage  
A toujours tant d’avantage !  
Elle a pour elle en partage  
L’agrément, et la raison.—*Marmontel.*

So many days had passed without a visit from their new friend, the Lyndons had begun to think he must have left town unexpectedly, and to form not a few ingenious conjectures as to the cause. However, they were all wasted, for he walked in one evening, when Emma was sitting alone; looking, she thought, so worn and depressed, her kindly sympathies were on the alert at once, though she knew better than to notice it.

‘You will have some time to wait, if you have anything to say to my husband,’ she said, observing Randolph look round, as if expecting him to appear. ‘It is his lecture night, and he will not be home before nine.’

‘If I may stay till then, I will gladly. I was not aware Mr. Lyndon had a lectureship. I have no doubt he is well worth listening to.’

‘Well, I have been told so by those who ought to know; and it is rather tantalizing, that it should only be on subjects that I cannot understand. But we shall not wait tea for him; he never drinks it at night unless he is going to sit up and work, which I never allow after the lecture.’

The refreshing draught, the cheerful little room, the pleasant open face, each after its own fashion, revived the wearied spirits of the visitor; still, through all his exertions to be agreeable, Emma could perceive there was something on his mind that he was longing to talk about, and hesitated to introduce. By way of giving him an opening, she inquired if he had been very busy.

‘Yes,’ said he, coolly, ‘pretty well. As if it were not enough to have half-a-dozen other people’s affairs to look into, I have been obliged to pay some attention to my own. There is not a more inconvenient blessing on earth than a thorough-going friend who happens to be a keen man of business; who does not care how he worries you so he secures your interests, and would rather risk your life than your money. Then, to vary the monotony of taking care of myself, I have had the comfort of losing some more letters belonging to other people.’

‘Again?’ said Emma, unable to help laughing; ‘you are certainly most unlucky. I hope you found them before they had caused the mischief of the last.’

‘The mischief remains to be seen; I have hopes of their recovery, from advertisements and promises of reward; but it has been a great source of vexation and worry.’

‘Were they of importance?’

‘I fear, as much as I hope, they are of very great importance. They form part of a collection left by General Conway to be examined by me. Unwelcome as the task has been, it was laid upon me in a manner that prevented refusal; and I soon found it involved so much justice to others, that I had no choice but to go on. I long to tell you much that I must at present keep back; what I have already discovered only makes me the more anxious for the rest. As soon as I know the whole, I shall endeavour to persuade the lady from whom I received them, to allow me to put them into your husband’s hands.’

‘Indeed?’ said Emma, looking up eagerly, ‘then they relate to——’

‘Yes; so far I may acknowledge. They *do* relate to that matter we wot of; very little interest would they have for me did they not. And Mrs. Lyndon, I may add further, that if, as I am inclined to believe, they give me opportunity of conferring on that haughty spirit such a boon as she hardly dares hope for, I shall have won a victory, consummated a revenge, such as rarely falls to the lot of man.’

‘Indeed you will,’ said Emma, warmly; ‘how touched, how grateful she will be! I envy your generous heart such a triumph!’

‘You do? Would you like to see how it casts its shadow before? The foretaste is often the sweetest part.’

He handed her a crumpled note; she read it with surprise and interest, her countenance changing visibly.

‘Well?’ said Randolph, as she looked up, and fixed her eyes on his, ‘is that plain enough, Mrs. Lyndon?’

‘One thing in it is very plain,’ said Emma; ‘it was not meant for you to read, and ought not to have been shown to you.’



‘That would not surprise you, if you knew the individual to whom it is addressed. It was innocently done—slipped as by mistake among waste papers, and given to me to test my skill in reading characters by handwriting. I saw the manœuvre, without guessing its meaning, till I found the letter; and then I had to use a little sleight of hand to carry it off. As a study of character it is a volume in itself.’

The bitter tone in which he spoke, dismayed Emma, and she hesitated how to reply. He had, indeed, brooded over every line, every word of Lady Adelaide’s letter, torturing himself with fancied meaning of personal scorn and defiance, that had destroyed his rest by night, and preyed on his spirits by day; while the discoveries breaking upon him through General Conway’s papers, served but to feed his feverish excitement.

‘Yes,’ he said, following Emma’s eyes, which had again turned wistfully to the letter, sympathising more warmly with the writer than she liked to show, ‘it has taught me one thing at least, that I only surmised before. It has shown me to a certainty *how* she is to be humbled. The more she scorns and hates me, the more gall-ing will it be to accept my services: and to reject them will be beyond her power. It is in my hands to do or leave undone; nothing she can write, or say, or look, can hinder me from doing as I have been doing the last few days, and mean to do till I succeed—and have won back for her, if it is to be won, the station she has lost. I vowed it when I saw her last; when I really believed—oh, how blindly!—that her nature was changed by her sorrows, and that she was the angel in heart that she is in form. I had her dear hand in mine—at my lips, for the first time in my life—and something beguiled me to hope—for the last!—’

He covered his face with his hands. Emma full of pity directly she saw him softened, expressed an opinion that he might yet be mistaken.

‘No,’ said he bitterly, though his eyes were moist with the anguish of which he was ashamed, ‘my mistake was *then*, in fancying physical weakness was moral regeneration. I know my course now, and shall follow it: and woe, tenfold woe to that proud, self-relying heart, when she looks round on her recovered prosperity, and owes it all to me!’

‘Well, I don’t know,’ said Emma; ‘I think I could put up with that, if I regained my mother; and I am very sure, if you succeeded in making her happy in one way, you would not undo it all again in another. People never feel so kindly as towards those they have served.’

‘Let me feel what I may, it will not alter the fact, or sweeten the wormwood of the obligation. But you may be sure also, if that day

ever comes, I shall not stay to be a witness of her mortification. Let me but carry out my end, and then England has nothing more to offer me, and will hear of me no more. Thank goodness I have no family ties, no duties, to chain me to one spot or climate.'

'No duties?' repeated Emma.

'No: what duties has a man with no near relations—no home, no work; whom no one will miss when he is gone, or cares particularly about while he stays? a man who has been the slave of a fatal and hopeless passion, till he is past the age for happiness, or usefulness, or content? Such a man can but do as he has hitherto done—roll on his proverbially mossless course—till he rolls down-hill.'

'But,' said Emma, to whose steady notions all this sounded very unsatisfactory doctrine, 'will not the duties follow him, roll he as fast as he may?'

'No,' said he, carelessly; 'I know of none that need concern a traveller, beyond taking care of portmanteau, passport, and purse. At least, these are generally enough for most men; and too much for some.'

'I have always been taught,' said Emma, 'that where God places us, we have our work to do; and I do believe we are never happy, or easy in our minds, when we leave it undone. Is not this true?'

'True? Doubtless, if you say so. The question is, what is the work?'

'I do not think there is much difficulty in finding it, is there? Where there is so much sin and so much sorrow, surely everybody may find some one to make better or happier.'

He was silent for some time, and she quietly took up her work. Presently, with a sigh, almost like a groan, he murmured, 'To make others better or happier, we ought to know how to do it for ourselves; and *that* knowledge if I ever had, I have long since lost.'

Emma looked up with surprise and concern.

'Ay,' he went on, 'it is not with us as with you, whose better thoughts and holier aspirations are cherished and protected like your green-house plants; *ours* are left to grow wild in the hedges, for weeds to choke and birds to peck at, and rough hands to pull up and tear down. It is a privilege of our constitutional freedom, no doubt, that no one can make us religious against our will; but little as you may suppose it, there are times when all that education and knowledge of the world can do for us, would be given, and gladly, for that peace and quietness in religion which we see in a woman's face.'

'Yes,' said Emma, honestly; 'I can quite imagine that. I do

not know what people do without it; only there is often a great deal of religion struggling in their hearts, that their neighbours cannot see, and have no idea of.'

'You, a religious woman, think so?'

'I never said I was more of a religious woman than anybody else. I only wish to do right, and constantly find myself doing just the reverse.'

'And the sense of that makes you hopeful about others?'

'Yes, in many cases.'

'Well, when I have asserted that principle myself before some religious people, I have been told I knew nothing of the matter.'

'They might not be far wrong,' said Emma, smiling; 'I must own your ideas seem to me somewhat vague. But do not you believe that there is good, even in the worst; and that to reach that is our best chance of getting rid of the evil?'

'Certainly; and it does me good to hear you say so. But how do you account for it?'

'How?' she repeated, surprised for a moment; then blushing at her own earnestness, she added, in a lower and reverent voice, 'is it not evidence of *His* presence striving in us, from whom *all* good things come? That very longing you speak of, is it not the working of an inner life, craving for its natural support and native air?'

He bent his head in silence, as if pondering over her words.

'And after all,' said Emma, growing bolder as she went on, and somewhat encouraged by the expression of his face; 'you talk of the hedge-row shrub as compared with the garden flower. Is that a fair simile? I think religion in a man is much more like a forest tree, to whose very existence these buffetings of wind and rain are necessary, which would kill a tenderer plant.'

'Very stunted specimens are many among us, then.'

'Very. But then, as my father says, trees that will have greenhouse shelter, must be content to live in Chinese flower-pots.'

'If, then,' said Randolph, 'a man is to be the better for being knocked about in life, disappointed in himself and others, till he lose all confidence in anybody and anything—what ought all this and more to have done for me?'

'Well, it might at any rate have taught you humility in judging yourself, and charity in judging others.'

'Humility?' repeated he, colouring; 'I really begin to think you fancy I am proud.'

'Did that never occur to you before?'

'Proud? I have no pride in me. Every man has his feelings—his sense of what is due to him—to his honour—to his character. What makes you think me proud?'

'I beg your pardon' said Emma. 'I may have wronged you.'

I was going to wrong you still more, perhaps, in doubting your charity.'

'Nay, there you do. Vagabond over the earth as I have been, thank Heaven, I have never yet seen want without giving it a helping hand, and never could. There is no merit in it; it is simply constitutional.'

'You have no pride and no uncharitableness. Indeed I wish you joy. You are free from two of the greatest miseries in the world. I may as well, then, put this letter into the fire.'

'What are you doing?' cried he, starting forwards; 'I would not part with it for a kingdom.'

'Ah!' said Emma, with a gentle smile, as she yielded it to his impatient grasp, 'I wonder which is most mistaken, you or I.'

He flushed violently, and there was a short silence. Then he pressed the paper to his lips, crushed it again in his hand, and flung it into the grate.

When he turned to look at Emma, he saw her eyes full of tears.

At that instant Henry came in. His quick glance, as he greeted his visitor, turned from him to his wife, with the eager inquiry, 'Anything new?'

No, Harry,' said Emma, smiling through her emotion, 'it is nothing new to see a brave man win a battle.'

'Ay,' said he; 'is it so? I am glad of it, for we want a little encouragement just now. I have a great deal to say to you, Mr. Randolph; and, by-the-by, Emma, my love—how soon could you be ready to go down to Cannymoor?'

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## CHAPTER XV

A horse, a horse! my kingdom for a horse!—*Shakespeare.*

IF the first appearance of Mr. Randolph caused a sensation in Cannymoor, it may readily be imagined what was produced by his sudden departure. No preparation, no warning, no visits of polite farewell; here to-day and gone to-morrow, as one may say; and coming back, nobody knew when, not even Dr. Home—who, when besieged with inquiries, only remarked, the lad would please himself and live the longer. And had he really just bought a horse and a pony, and hired a gipsy to look after them, keeping him at the inn till his return? How delightfully eccentric!

Yes, Dr. Home admitted, it was eccentric enough, if that were all; and master and man seemed well-matched; but the cattle must be exercised since they were there, and willing and clever as Colly was, she would cut no great figure in the circus, so it was as well. At any rate, the tamer of horses was in the way of hearing

what was good, if he chose to profit by it; and so long as he kept sober and quiet, it was no affair of anybody's what his antecedents might be.

In real truth, it had been against his judgment that Randolph had made a temporary groom of Abner: the old gentleman arguing that to leave a man of that stamp hanging about a village inn, with nothing to do, was putting him into temptation instead of taking him out. However, Maurice, as usual, went his own way to work, and Abner was ordered to fit himself out, and solemnly engaged on satisfactory terms as attendant on himself and his stud—with a few private bye-laws, adapted to his peculiar genius, and a peremptory injunction to make himself useful at the rectory. At the rectory accordingly, he spent great part of his time, and gratitude for the services he rendered Colly, and the fatigue he saved her, made her master and herself more than usually zealous for his moral and religious improvement. He was willing enough to be improved, as it appeared; learnt the Catechism in obedience to his reverence's order, and sat patiently attentive to the chapter, which Colly, with her best spectacles on, made a point of reading out, very slow and very loud, every evening before they parted; but when the two kind missionaries came to compare notes of their progress, it must be owned they had not a great deal to show. Perhaps they were a little too impatient, as the wisest missionaries are apt to be; but at any rate delayed success did not diminish their good-will; nor did it appear to them the satisfactory argument it seems, in the present day, to be considered—for ceasing to try.

One thing was, however, palpable to everybody's understanding, and that was the new parishioner's devotion to his four-footed charge; and Mr. Randolph's groom and horse and Mr. Randolph's pony were the favourite objects of attraction in their master's absence, especially in the eyes of one individual, who thought the beauty of the animals only to be equalled by the rare felicity of the rider.

Boys may live, grow, and thrive, without crossing a pony's back, as Caspar Hauser did without looking over his own shoulder, and never know or care for what they have missed; but once come to the knowledge of that great want, it soon becomes a hunger that craves to be satisfied. From the day when Walter had cantered round the churchyard, life on foot had become a burden to him, and he to everybody else. Ride he must, and ride he would; every gentleman did. His papa had horses in India, and why didn't grandpapa, since he was a squire, live like other people, and as the Squire Lyndons used to do before him? Or, at any rate— and this was the burden of the whole—when would his mamma give him a pony of his own? She tried to put the idea out of his

head, by devoting herself more than ever to his amusement, but in vain. His dreams at night, like his yearnings by day, were all on the unattainable happiness ; and instead of soldiers, his slate was now regularly filled with marvellous quadrupeds, all mane and tail, with ecstatic riders perched upon them, nowhere particular, adhering by some mysterious law of gravitation, not comprehensible to ordinary minds. But one day he came in from a walk, his face beaming with rapture. He had met Abner, and the horse and pony, and talked to him about longing to ride, and Abner was such a good-natured fellow, he put him on directly, and they had been cantering ever so far, and so fast ! and Abner said his master's orders were, if ever Master Lyndon wished to use the pony, it was to be at his service. Was it not kind ? And now he could ride every day, for Abner said the pony had not half enough work, and was eating his own little head off, as fast as he did his hay.

Much to Walter's consternation, his mother looked very serious indeed ; and though she did not blame him for doing what he had been allowed to do once before, she forbade his ever repeating the indulgence. She could not give him her reasons ; but he must be content this time to believe she knew best, and would not refuse him if it was right. It was a bitter disappointment ; and long did he argue the point, much longer than she had ever known him do before. Penelope's words came back to her memory, as hasty words, hardly heeded at the time, so often do : ' Stay till you thwart his inclinations, and *then* see if he will obey ! ' And with the remembrance, her face grew so stern and sad, the boy could only fling his arms round her neck, and promise not to ask her any more.

But the next day was bright and fine, for those who did not mind a March wind : and as Walter plodded through his lessons, the image of the pony was perpetually before his eyes. That morning, multiplication was vexation indeed, copies were a nuisance, his favourite chapters of history dull and uninteresting. Who cared whether the Gauls got into the Capitol or not ? They were all geese together, as far as he could see : and as to Bruce at Bannockburn, a fellow who would throw great spikes about to lame horses, deserved to lose the battle, and he wished he had ! Nothing went right, and his mother's patience was sorely tried. To put him into better humour, she went out to walk sooner than usual ; and promised, after calling to see her sick pensioner, to take their long-talked of expedition to the quarry, and hunt for geological specimens. This, though science in general was pronounced stupid stuff, was ungraciously admitted to be some consolation ; and once out in the air, his spirits began to revive, and his tongue to rattle as usual.

The old sergeant was sitting on a bench outside his door, so intent upon some employment over which he was stooping, that they called several times to him through the garden gate before he looked up. Directly he saw who were standing there, he rose to admit them, and made his customary salute, though more sullenly than was his wont in the presence of my lady. The fact was, he was rather ashamed of the occupation in which he had been detected, and glanced half-fiercely at Lady Adelaide's face, as if prepared to resent any remark that might be made. She was, indeed, a little surprised to see he was cutting out with his clasp-knife a tiny chest of drawers, such as dolls and dolls' mothers delight in; but when, as she entered, she recognized, shyly hiding behind him, his sick lodger's child, she understood at once, and her heart thrilled with pleasure. The old man tried to seem indifferent, and to mutter something about the plague of a squalling brat; but he could not resist her smile.

'Yes, my lady, you see how it is. A precious fool I make of myself, at this fiddling work; but this here babby, not a soul out of doors will look at her, or play with her; but call her the little tramp, and the gipsy, and the unbaptized heathen, and I don't know what; so thin s I, if that's her sort, she's like to belong to me, and if your good people won't be kind to her, I must. If she turns out bad, it is just their faults for leaving her to such a hardened old sinner.'

The sneer that accompanied these words gave a peculiarly savage expression to his features, as he resumed his employment. Lady Adelaide stood considering him for a few moments in silence.

'Sergeant Wade,' she said, presently, 'because we are sinners, does it follow that we must be hardened too?'

He looked up, and eyed her intently now, in his turn.

'We, my lady? I didn't know *you* were one. I don't go by the spiteful things fools choose to say.'

'Nor I,' said she gently; 'my own conscience tells me quite enough.'

'Ay, ay,' said the old man, with a sarcastic smile, 'I know what that means. Many's the time I've heard folks call themselves sinners, and look dismal enough about it; but it's only *li'any* sinners that they mean, after all. I never yet found *one* who would own to a single wrong thing he had done in his life!'

'Listen, sergeant,' said Lady Adelaide, with an emotion in her voice that gave it additional earnestness: 'this much I can, and will own to you, sooner than you should doubt us all. I am at this very moment suffering the consequences of having done wrong--not once, nor twice. How long I may have to bear them, God only knows, who gave us His law, and takes care to make it honourable;

but it would be a heavy addition to my sorrow, if I felt my heart grow hardened, so that I could not repent.'

He seemed touched in spite of himself.

'Since your ladyship says it, it is not for me to contradict you, but I'd believe no one else; and I don't believe now that you've ever done aught to make *them*,' with a jerk of his thumb at the public generally, 'speak against you as they does.'

'Perhaps not,' she said; 'but I am afraid I have done quite a little to make them speak in my favour. You and I have not made ourselves beloved by our neighbours, sergeant. We have thought so much of ourselves—no matter whether because we felt we were better or worse than others—that we have had no room in our hearts for them, and they have shut theirs against us. I have resolved this shall not be the case any longer with *me*; will *you* try the same?'

His shaggy head drooped on his breast despondingly, almost like despair.

'I am a plain man, my lady, and I speak my mind. You have done me great honour by putting yourself in the same boat with me, as it were; but it don't stand to reason as it should be true. Supposing they do go to call you proud, and high, and such like, which is what *I* never found you, nor anything but what a lady ought to be, my lady—and many thanks to you for all the respect you have showed me and my house many a time—how does *that* make you out to be such a one as I? Do you know what I am? Do you know what I have seen, and done, and *felt* too? Ay, and there was a time when I was what they call religious, and thought myself a pilgrim, like the one I read of in my mother's old book, with my face turned to the bright city that I used to think of when I was looking after the sheep. And I was happier then, silly lad as I was, than I have ever been since. Shall I tell you why? My lady, I broke my mother's heart—I did! And how do you think I was punished when my turn came? My own son trampled upon mine!'

He stood upright before her now; his arms folded on his breast; his light blue eyes glaring with that wild flash, almost like insanity, which they wore when unusually excited. Then with a deep groan, as if he actually felt the foot treading out of his spirit its life and spring, he turned away into his own apartment, and resting his arms on the table, buried his face between them.

Lady Adelaide made no attempt to console him—she knew the depths of that agony too well. A sick dread, unknown till now, had suddenly made its way into her heart; and as she slowly mounted the little steep staircase, her whole soul went up in a silent but bitter entreaty—'Not that, not that, merciful Father!



Is not my punishment heavy enough without? Spare me even the fear of such a one as that one—which I could not face and live!’

Walter had not accompanied her into the cottage. As she entered the garden, he had caught a distant glimpse of Abner and the pony on the moor, and lingered to watch them coming up. His mother always left it to his own discretion whether to go in with her or not, and he was in the mood to think sick people and old men stupid and tiresome. As he was standing and wishing—as young folks will persist in doing, and so lose all the comfort of obedience—Stephen Ball, who was lounging idly, as usual, over his father’s gate, began to tease him with questions, as to how much ice he had pumped up lately, and if his mamma meant to bring him up as dry-nurse to all the gipsy children, and if he knew yet how many sticks went to a crow’s nest, and other agreeable tokens of an inquiring mind. To all which Walter made very scornful answers, commenting on the ignorance of great lazy dunces, who knew nothing of natural philosophy or science, and therefore were not worth talking to.

‘And how much may *you* know about it, master, since you’re so clever?’

‘I know a great deal more than you have any idea of. If you like to be civil, I will teach you something.’

‘Much obliged to you, master, but I’m thinking I know as much as you.’

‘You think so, you conceited noodle? What do you suppose we are going to the quarry for, presently?’

‘No good, I’ll be bound,’ said Stephen.

‘You needn’t be impudent; there is no wit in that. I will tell you—we are going to look for specimens.’

‘Mighty queer ones, too, judging from what you found last time.’

‘Nonsense; I tell you these are geological specimens—but what can you know about geology? You never heard of the crust of the earth in your life, I dare say?’

‘No, I can’t say as ever I did. What’s it for?’

‘Well, never mind what it’s for—that has nothing to do with it. There is a crust—remember that.’

‘A precious gritty one, then.’

‘And it is divided into formations.’

‘What’s that?’

‘Don’t be so stupid; formations are—are—don’t you know? there is the primary—the second—’

‘Oh, ah, I know all about it; I see now, and I know what it’s meant for, if you don’t.’

‘What, pray?’

‘To eat with the green cheese as the moon is made on—haw! haw! haw!’

Walter gave it up; there was no working on such thankless soil; Abner was now close at hand, and he had other things to think of. Certainly it did seem a curious thing, but whenever he or his mamma went out, they always *did* meet or see Abner somewhere, just as if he did it on purpose; it was quite odd. Alas! it was no use meeting him now, for the pleasure was forbidden.

‘Mornin’, Master Lyndon,’ said Abner, as he came up. ‘Jack is at your service, as lively as a kitten.’

‘Thank you, Abner, very much—not to-day.’

‘Fine day, sir; couldn’t be better for the moors.’

Walter shook his head.

‘He’s too great a baby,’ said Stephen, grinning. ‘A go-cart is the thing for him, a dear—with his mammy a-shovin’ of it behind.’

Walter’s look might have reduced him to powder, but he still said nothing.

‘My lady in there?’ asked Abner, with a jerk of his head towards the cottage. ‘Shall I ask leave?’ added he, not being troubled with over-much diffidence, or any such inconvenient commodity.

‘No, I promised I would not ask. Oh dear! how I wish I could go!’

‘Pretty talking!’ quoth Stephen; ‘you know you would be chucked over his head.’

‘I shouldn’t: I rode him yesterday.’

‘Look here, Master Lyndon,’ said Abner; ‘you didn’t promise for nobody but yourself, did you?’

‘No.’

‘Then lay hold, youngster, for a minute.’ And Abner threw the rein to Stephen, and marched straight into the cottage, as the door had been left ajar for the convenience of the visitors. He had to wait a little while till Lady Adelaide came down, and took up a strong position at the foot of the stairs, so that she could not pass till he had said what he had to say. She looked rather surprised, and not particularly pleased, on finding him there, hat in hand, requesting permission to give Master Lyndon a ride. Her little boy knew her wishes on the subject, and though she thanked him for the intended civility, he must allow her to be the best judge. And considering the matter settled, she attempted to descend the stairs, but Abner showed no symptoms of getting out of the way. Certainly her ladyship knew best, but it was a servant’s business to obey orders, and his master’s were, that if Master Lyndon wished to ride, he was to ride, and no mistake; and he (Abner), begging her ladyship’s pardon, couldn’t find it in his conscience to hinder the young gentleman’s good feeling—no more than nothing could.

Unmoved by this last touch of pathos, Lady Adelaide answered coldly, that she was much obliged to his master for his politeness; and signed to him to let her pass—but in vain.

‘At least, my lady, you will clear me to my master, for it will hit him uncommon hard, seeing as he only bought the pony to please the young gentleman—not but what he’s well worth *any* gentleman’s buying, or lady either, for that matter—would carry your ladyship like the wind, if you’d only be so condescending as to try; and a proud and happy man would my master be, my lady, I’m sure.’

‘Will you allow me to pass, sir?’ said Lady Adelaide, offended at his pertinacity: ‘your master shall hear how his orders have been obeyed, and I beg I may be exempt from this importunity in future. Do you hear me, sir?’ she continued so imperiously, that the gipsy was fain to succumb, and drew back with a bow, muttering to himself, that for a thoroughbred, he never saw one that he would like less to mount without a martingale.

‘Where is Master Lyndon?’ asked Lady Adelaide, as she passed him.

‘Where is he? Waiting outside, like the dutifullest young lamb as ever——’

The words were yet on his lips when a shout echoed by several voices, made them both start; and then came the outcry, ‘It’s off with him! stop him! stop him! help, help, some one!’

The next instant, Lady Adelaide, Abner, and Sergeant Wade were all outside the gate, without either of them knowing exactly how they got there. The pony was gone, and so was Walter. Stephen was racing off towards the moor, as if in pursuit; Mrs. Ball and her children, and one or two more, were staring and screaming after him, and Abner’s hurried inquiries at first could obtain no answer. However, it soon came out that Stephen and Master Lyndon had been squabbling about the pony, and Stephen said Master Lyndon was afraid to get on, and Master Lyndon jumped on directly, and whose fault it was, nobody knew, but the pony set off full gallop: there was Master Lyndon’s cap on the road; it took him all by surprise, like.

Abner waited for no more, but started off at the full speed of his long legs; Lady Adelaide made an effort to follow him, but her limbs refused to obey her will—a spasm shot through her heart that took away breath, voice, and power, and she sunk down on a large log by Mrs. Ball’s gate. The sergeant, dismayed at the ghastly expression of her features, hurried to support and comfort her. ‘Long life to you, madam, keep up! You didn’t used to want heart—don’t fancy mischief till it comes.’

It was indeed unusual to see her so completely overcome by mere nervous terror; but cool and brave as she naturally was, and had

shown herself to be, she was as prostrated now as if she had actually seen her boy hurled lifeless before her eyes; and could only sit pressing her hands to her heart, convulsively labouring for breath.

'Ye foolish body!' cried the sergeant, turning angrily to Mrs. Ball, as she stood, open-mouthed with excitement, 'can ye do nothing better to help a mother in trouble than gaping at her like a unfledged pyet? Haven't you an ounce of sense along with all your gossip and rubbish?'

'You just be civil, and mind your own business; to be sure I can help her ladyship if she'll let me. I've got, by rare good luck, some of the good gentleman's wonderful stuff. I'll fetch it for her in a minute.'

Back came Mrs. Ball with a very dubious-looking tumbler, containing about two table-spoonfuls of what seemed to be water, none of the clearest; and this she pressed upon her ladyship with all the zeal of a proselyte. 'Mr. Randolph, bless him, had mixed it his own self, so it must do her good. He said it would cure everything, from a chilblain to a broken leg—no, heart, I mean. Do just sip it, my lady; a spoonful is the dose.'

Without noticing the proffered elixir, Lady Adelaide, by a strong effort, regained her voice sufficiently to whisper hoarsely, 'Was it your boy's doing?'

'Lawk, my lady, I hope not. There aint no malice in our Stephen, only he is idle, and he and the young squire never do get on, somehow; and boys will be boys; and the lads about here do owe him a grudge, like, for laughing at them, and that; but to go for to do him a mischief—oh no, my lady! don't think it. It's a precious good hiding as his father will give him, if he has.'

'Or if he don't,' put in the sergeant, 'I know one who will.'

A cheerful halloo in the distance, of 'All right!' stopped this last piece of consolation, and the angry word that was on Mrs. Ball's tongue. Lady Adelaide, restored to new life, stood up, her face all one glow of thankfulness, which was shared by all around her, as the pony was seen, coming full trot, with Walter in the saddle, and Abner running by his side; Stephen keeping prudently in the rear. The relief of seeing him safe, for a moment banished the recollection of his disobedience; and it seemed rather to have escaped his own memory, for he jumped off, as soon as he reached his mother, patting the pony's neck exultingly, loudly declaring it was 'the best and most darling creature in the world,' and appealing to his friend Abner to bear witness that he had not even lost his stirrups, and actually stopped and turned him all by himself. 'I am sure you need never be afraid of trusting me again, mamma—never!'

'Ah, Walter,' she said, gravely and sadly, 'this morning I thought so too.'

He looked up in dismay. 'Oh, mamma!' he began; but without listening, she turned to thank the neighbours for their attention and sympathy, received Abner's apologies with courtesy, and then desired Walter to follow her home. He was doing so, his cheeks burning with mortification and shame, when Stephen, who ventured near as soon as my lady's back was turned, could not refrain from a polite remark that he 'would just about catch it for slipping mammy's apron-string.' Stung with rage, Walter turned, and flew at his enemy, who, however, kept him at arm's length; and the sergeant promptly stepping between them, bade Stephen hold his saucy tongue, or he would know the reason why. 'And as for you, bairn,' he said to Walter, 'run after your mother—don't think twice about it—and never rest till you have her pardon. You have put a thorn into her heart to-day, that you will find in your dying pillow, if you live to be a hundred.'

Silently Walter followed his mother home; he did not venture to walk by her side, and she never looked round. He felt exceedingly miserable, more so than he had ever been in his life, and yet not penitent, exactly. It seemed hard that he might not ride, and to be jeered at by a rude lad as a coward; and then, instead of being praised for his courage, to be shamed before all those people! And with these thoughts, a spirit of rebellion began to swell in his bosom, and when they reached the Manorhouse, and they stood side by side, he was in the humour to resent everything that could be said or done. Rather to his discomfiture, she still took no notice of him, but entered the house, and went to her own room, without speaking a word.

It was his first real disgrace, and he felt it keenly; but still with a sense of being wronged. If she had been by when Stephen mocked him, he was sure she would have been the first to encourage his mounting; if he could only explain how it was, she would see he was not to blame; and over and over again he planned all the good sound arguments by which she was to be convinced, but to no purpose. Except in that one cutting sentence, she made no allusion to what had passed; and what was worse, did not seem to see him, even when he came close to her, and looked wistfully in her face. He had no idea till then that he could ever be afraid of his own mamma; he began to see what it was kept people at a distance when she chose to do so; he could no more have jumped upon her lap when she looked as she did then, than he could have thrust his hand into the fire. To go humbly and ask her pardon, though he knew he ought, was what he was not yet penitent enough for; so there was nothing for it, but to get

through the disagreeable, miserable, angry day as well he could—and never had he known such. His grandpapa, after the post came in, was in one of his worst humours; nothing was right, and his own misdemeanours only made matters worse, for everybody proved to be in fault. Mr. Randolph was officious for offering the pony; the groom was impudent for pressing it; Walter was very naughty for accepting it; Adelaide was more to blame than any one for allowing it, and not making the boy mind what he was told; Aunt Penny was wrong for scolding him, as if a child was expected to know everything without being told; and Aunt Lucy worse still for pitying him, as if young people were never to be corrected, or punished when they did what they ought not. There was no whist that evening, and very little conversation; Mr. Spindler came to tea, and his presence seemed to add to the Squire's irritation; they talked together in a low tone for some time, and the more they talked, the more worried Mr. Lyndon looked, and the crosser he became. Then Mr. Spindler, who of course had heard about the pony—did anything disagreeable ever happen that he did not hear of?—must needs go and sit close to Lady Adelaide, and talk to her about it; not in the least repelled by the manner in which she answered him, but asking her all sorts of inquisitive questions, and generously volunteering his opinion on all sorts of subjects, as if they had been the most intimate friends in the world. Well, the evening could not endure for ever, and Walter's bed-time came at last, and glad he was—until, on wishing all 'good night,' he discovered that his mother was not coming upstairs. He stood before her, reckless of Mr. Spindler's twinkling eyes that watched them both with so much curiosity; and gulping down the big sob that was ready to break out; but she went on working, and took no notice.

'Good night, mamma!' he faltered at last. She raised her eyes slowly, looked full into his, and pointed to the door. He dashed out of the room, and upstairs in a minute—flung himself on his bed, and there gave way to such a passionate burst of crying, that he was heard all over the house.

He felt so miserable, he thought he must die: nobody ever could live like that. He had heard of broken hearts—suppose his broke now? His own, own darling mamma not to speak to him, or kiss him!—Grief could go no further, and he buried his face in the pillow, and wondered what she would say if she found he was dead.

By and by there was a step near his door—and looking up, through his blinding tears, he saw his mother standing on the threshold. There was something so sorrowful in her countenance, that the remains of his pride and stubbornness gave way, and he

started up with a passionate entreaty for forgiveness. It was all she was waiting for. She closed the door, seated herself on his bed, and folded him in her arms. He clung as if they had been separated for a year, repeating in broken accents how unhappy he had been, and that he really did not think he could have borne it much longer if she had not come soon. She gave a very heavy sigh, and pressed him closer to her bosom.

'Walter,' she said, in a low earnest voice, that thrilled him with strange excitement, 'I am going to place a confidence in you that I am sure you will not misuse. It may help you to understand why I looked so grave and cold. I was thankful to see you safe—I bless God for His mercy! but to see you had disobeyed me was a grief I hardly knew how to bear. Shall I tell you why? Walter, when I was young—older than you are, old enough to know my duty, and to do it—I, too, disobeyed—I rebelled against my mother's express commands, and in defiance of her wishes married your father. You know how dear his memory is, you have seen how sad my life has been since we lost him; but no one can tell how every sorrow has been embittered by that one bitter remembrance. I saw your little sister die—I saw your father fall—I suffered anxiety and fatigue in saving you—I went through scenes that I could never describe to you—I have been sad enough and weary enough to feel, as you did just now, that I could not bear it much longer; but, Walter, there is nothing I have borne that is half so terrible as this unforgiven sin. You have felt it weary work to be without my love for a day; I have had it to bear for years, and am nearly hopeless now. No repentance—no entreaty—no tears—many and bitter as they have been—have turned her heart back to me again—and perhaps, never will.'

'Oh, mamma, mamma! how cruel of her! You kissed me directly I said I was sorry—why will she not believe you when you tell her you are?'

'I have never seen her since, Walter: I may never see her again. I am forbidden to write, or to visit her. No, do not call her cruel; you do not know all, nor half her goodness, her excellence—so good, so excellent, that disobedience was only the greatest sin!'

'As mine was to you,' murmured Walter, nestling closer to his mother, whom he never worshipped as at this moment. Presently he began to wonder whether, when he grew bigger, he should ever see his grandmamma, and if he did, whether he could tell her how sorry his mamma was, and how good and kind she was to *him* when he was disobedient. Something of this he expressed aloud, and though his mother could not share the sanguine hope that was fast rising into certainty, she kissed him for his sympathy, reminding

him, in a serious tone, that he must first show himself worthy of the confidence she had reposed in him. It was now time for him to be in bed ; so they would talk no more, but join together in prayer, that they might both be forgiven, and both be enabled to amend. Walter, deeply impressed, and quite subdued, knelt down by her side immediately : and if ever prayers went up from humble and contrite hearts, they were those that night of both mother and son.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

*Imogen.*

I am sorry, sir,  
 You put me to forget a lady's manner,  
 By being so verbal ; and learn now, for all,  
 That I, which know my heart, do here pronounce,  
 By the very truth of it, I care not for you.—*Shakespeare.*

BUT a new source of anxiety had been created for Lady Adelaide by this incident. There was no doubt of Walter's penitence or sincerity ; but it had shaken her security in his childish submission, and she was compelled to face the truth, that he was growing too old and forward to be safely brought up at home. She could not always keep him by her side ; he would mix with such society as he found most attractive, and whether he quarrelled with village boys, or made friends with a gipsy horse-dealer, in point of evil seemed to her pretty much the same. He thought too much of himself and his own gratification ; it was time, she felt, that he was with his compeers, learning to be a man among men, even if, in some things, he learned less than she could teach him at home. It was heavy work to contemplate her daily life without his society, but if it was for his good, that she must try and bear. But when she had reached this point, another painful question arose. How was he to go to school ? The income she possessed, when her share of the household expenses was deducted, barely sufficed for their clothes, and fell far short of the necessary sum for such a school as she would wish to choose. Her father-in-law had often talked, and rather grandly, of Eton, or Harrow, or Westminster, as the only proper place for his heir's education ; but whether he ever seriously contemplated such an expense, Adelaide doubted, as strongly as she was convinced he *would* assist to the best of his ability, provided it were done in his own way. It took her some time, and cost her a painful struggle to resolve on breaking the subject to him ; but she was little prepared for the scene that ensued. Mr. Lyndon flew into one of his most violent fits of rage, declared they all wanted to ruin him, and he should be a beggar now before he died. School ? Walter must learn business, and how to make money, as *he* had done ; a fine gentleman's life had not answered with his father, and



should not be tried on him. He thought Adelaide had more sense, more consideration, more gratitude. He had done all he could for her, and she never seemed satisfied, and he could do no more. If she wanted more done she must apply to those better off than himself—with other speeches of a similar nature, which resulted in Penelope, who was present, coming up to where her sister-in-law was standing, and drawing her arm in hers. She did not mind skirmishing with Adelaide herself—rather the reverse—but she had no idea of seeing her so browbeaten by anybody else.

‘I tell you what, my dear,’ she said, as Mr. Lyndon turned on his heel, and left the room, ‘I can no more stand all this than I can fly. He has nearly fretted me into fiddle-strings already the last week; and now he has turned upon you, it is high time to look about us. There is something wrong somewhere, and if he will not tell me, I must find it out before it is too late, or we shall be in trouble before we know where we are. Don’t look so downcast; you must not mind his being put out; you were in the right all the time, and he knew it, only it was the wrong moment to bring it forward; and if you had just been condescending enough to let me know what you were going to do, I could have told you how it would be, and have saved you all this worry, Adelaide, my dear.’

‘Thank you,’ said Lady Adelaide, frankly, ‘and another time I will. I am grieved to have vexed him,’ she added, after a short struggle; ‘and that I did not consult you first; but as I have been a burden to you so long, you may imagine, Penelope, how very unwilling I felt to mention anything that seemed like encroaching further.’

‘Now just say nothing about that, or we shall quarrel. Unwilling?—yes, I could see it was gall and wormwood to you, by your face, poor thing!—and then to get snubbed after all! Well, never mind, it is neighbour’s fare; you have often snubbed other people, so now you know what it is.’

Penelope’s consolations were not of the gentlest sort; but somehow there was greater cordiality between the sisters-in-law at that time than there had ever been before. Each had, almost unawares, given way a little; and each was surprised to find the other meeting her half way; while their mutual support became the more necessary, from the increasing depression of Mr. Lyndon’s spirits—depression that always deepened into the darkest gloom after one of Mr. Spindler’s attentive chatty visits. Miss Lyndon, as she said, took her own private measures; and the result appeared in a cheerful letter from her cousin Henry, offering to pay the Manorhouse a visit, and bring his wife and child to be introduced to the head of the family. This, happily, pleased the Squire; a friendly invitation was despatched, and his thoughts

were somewhat diverted by the bustle of brisk preparation that commenced forthwith. Mr. Spindler, being good enough to call that evening, heard the news, and sent it round the village, *via* Miss Chatterley, the next day; and so put everybody into a fever of curiosity to see Mrs. Henry Lyndon, that would have mightily disconcerted that lady had she been aware of the fact. As for Mr. Lyndon, still out of humour with his daughter-in-law, he seized on the coming of his expected guest as a weapon offensive and defensive; and flourished Emma's virtues over Adelaide's head, as a model, and pattern, and reproach, till she dreaded the very sound of her name.

It was on the afternoon of the day they were expected, that as Lady Adelaide was taking her turn of sitting with her mother-in-law, she was surprised by the entrance of Mr. Spindler: surprised, because he hardly ever called on ladies at that hour, and it was evident this visit was to herself. However, as it must be borne, she prepared to bear it with resignation, and only hoped, by distant politeness, to tire him into a speedy departure. Quite indifferent as to the nature of his reception, he drew his chair as close to hers as she would let him, glanced with a significant nod at Mrs. Lyndon, who was quietly dozing by the fire, and expressed his great satisfaction at having found her at last 'as good as alone.' 'For you must know, my lady, I have been dodging and waiting very often lately, to get a word with you, private and confidential, and never could hit upon the right moment. I have something *very* particular to tell your ladyship.'

Her ladyship did not look curious; but she said, 'Indeed?'

'Something to *say*, and something to *show*, I ought to have said first, my lady. Will you just be so good as to look at *this*?'

And taking out a large pocket-book, he drew forth and spread on the table a plan, which she at once perceived to be that of the Lyndon property.

'You see what this is, my lady?'

'I believe I do, Mr. Spindler.'

'You see where this estate formerly extended; a fine one it was, my lady, and all crumbled away, bit by bit, because it was in hands that didn't know the value of money when they had it. You see where I have drawn a line in red ink—that is all *mine* now; the blue lines are the bits in other people's hands, that I hope to pick up by and by; and the black is the Squire's—*as yet*. Now, what I want your ladyship to observe, is this: *who*, in the course of nature, supposing all this to be now in the family, would naturally inherit the whole?'

'My boy Walter, to my sorrow and his,' said Lady Adelaide, with a sigh.

‘Sorrow? It would be a very pretty inheritance, my lady, I can tell you that! Oh, ah—I see,—I beg pardon; I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings. Of course we all know what an heir implies; and business must be done, you know, my lady, for we are all here to-day, and gone to-morrow——’

‘May I beg of you, sir, to confine yourself then to the business, whatever it may be?’

‘Certainly, certainly. Now, assuming your son to stand as the representative and lineal heir, does it not seem a thousand pities that it should be chopped up and divided in this way—one having the house, and another the land, a handful here, and a handful there, instead of the whole being united under one master with the family name—eh?’

Lady Adelaide did not deny it, but thought it was too late now to regret the misfortune.

‘Too late to regret, but not too late to remedy it, my lady, begging your pardon. For my part, it would be a great satisfaction to me to think so fine a little gentleman as Walter should stand in his ancestors’ shoes, as it were, and cut as good a figure as the best of ‘em; it would, indeed, my lady.’

‘You are very good, sir,’ said Lady Adelaide.

‘Well, but now, let us consider, my lady, if there is not some way of arranging it. It is only right you should know. You have observed, perhaps, that my good friend, Mr. Lyndon, has been rather low lately? You have? Well, so I thought; and I believe I can explain how it is.’

Lady Adelaide interrupted him here by disclaiming all curiosity respecting Mr. Lyndon’s affairs. Whatever she ought to know, he would tell her himself when he thought proper.

‘That is as may be, my lady. Perhaps there may be two ways of looking at that question. Perhaps I may know things that he does not; and at any rate may have good reasons for speaking, with which he has nothing to do. The long and the short of the matter is this, Lady Adelaide—Mr. Lyndon owes me money.’

She was interested now, he could see, by the way her work dropped on her knee.

‘Some time ago, you see, Lady Adelaide (I’m not going to bother you with business particulars, which no lady can be expected to understand, but merely just the heads, as it were), I advanced a good round sum to set up a young man in Australia, who was a friend of—of—ahem!’ with a bow, ‘the lamented captain’s, I believe. Mr. Lyndon and another were the securities; there was no risk for me, the guarantee was excellent, and one must do a kind thing now and then; so I did it, and my interest came in regularly, and all seemed right, till lately; and now there

has been some smashing among the houses of business, and the other security is gone to the dogs, and Hansell can't make ends meet out in the bush, and no one is left to pay but Mr. Lyndon, you see, my lady.'

'I see, sir, but too plainly. But how this is to make my son a large proprietor——'

'That is just what I am coming to. I know the good Squire's affairs better than he does. I know that a great lot of his money is locked up in investments that I wouldn't take at a gift. I know the house he is connected with is among the breakers (ha! ha! I didn't mean a pun), and it will take a little time, and a little money too, to make them weather the storm. I know all his resources, and to pay me if I claim my principal just now, there is but one thing he can do, without getting deeper into the scrape, and that is, to sell this place. A great pity, you think, my lady, and so do I. I don't want him to do that; but I will tell you what I *do* want, and I think you will say it is a liberal offer. I will arrange so that his debt shall never trouble him in the least, if he will on his part, settle the property upon *you*——'

'Sir!' said Lady Adelaide, about to rise from her chair.

He begged her to remain, as he had not yet come to the essential part of the business; and particularly entreated, in justice to everybody, that she would hear him without interruption. She waited accordingly, after a moment's hesitation; looking very stately, and anything but encouraging. He rubbed his hands, dived into his pockets, and not finding the sixpence, rubbed them again, gratis.

'I am a man, Lady Adelaide, as perhaps you are aware, who have made my own way in the world. With these two hands,' stretching them wide before her reluctant eyes, 'I have scraped together, more or less, we'll say, about—no, I won't come down to figures; I only just throw out a hint, that I *have* made a good thing of it altogether. Now I am getting older than I was (though mine is by ten per cent. a better life than Mr. Lyndon's), and I want to be comfortable and settled. I should like to make a little show for my money, and I have no objection to a good house in a fashionable part of London (one can always let there to advantage), or to a handsome carriage and livery, or an opera-box, or anything of that sort—provided I have a lady at the head of my household who understands what's what, and will give a stylish air to the whole thing. For such a lady, I would make any arrangement in the way of settlements that might be expected; and, in short, to come to the point without more ado, my lady—I will settle the whole of the Lyndon property on you and Walter, after my death, if, as I said before, Mr. Lyndon will do the same

by the house and grounds, and you will consent to make Abel Spindler the proudest and happiest of men.'

He bent forward on his chair, as if ready on the smallest encouragement to drop on his knee, and take her hand; he durst not touch it without. By a resolute effort of self-command she had preserved her composure; but she was obliged to remain silent a few moments even after he had stopped speaking, to make sure that her contempt and resentment would not get the better of her dignity. When she did speak, however, there was no mistake about her meaning. She forced herself to expressions of gratitude for intended liberality; but did not disguise her astonishment, at Mr. Spindler's ever entertaining for a moment the possibility of such an offer being accepted. She could not accuse herself of having given him any encouragement.

'Did I ever say you had, my lady? Not I. I have not watched you all this while for nothing. I know every turn of your lip pretty well by this time, and I am not so foolish as to expect you to care about me for myself; we leave all that nonsense for young folks who know no better; I only make you a handsome offer, and no offence being meant, none need be taken that I can see. It is no secret what your marriage *here* cost you. Now don't fire up, my lady, before you hear me out! Anybody can see how you are left in the world, with nothing of your own, and your boy with no prospects whatever that I know of. Now, if you think better of what I have said, you will be able to snap your fingers at all your proud relations, and be beholden to nobody; and when they see how well off you are without their help, may be they will come round all the sooner; for your grand folks know the difference, none better, between an imprudent marriage for love, and a sensible one for money. So take your time before you answer, my lady; I can wait.'

'I have answered you, sir; and with more patience than I could have believed possible. I would request you now not to try me any further.'

'Well, well, I won't give it up—I can't. You *must* see it is all handsome and liberal on my part. Think of all this property united again under Walter! And as for my name, I don't care about changing it, to please you. It can be Spindler-Lyndon or Lyndon-Spindler, or what you like; it will only cost a little money to the Heralds' College——'

The blood of all the Chesters was nearly boiling over.

'For the last time, sir, I must beg you to receive my answer. I am unwilling to admit the possibility of your presuming to insult me; but if you persist——'

'Presume! insult, indeed!' said he, waxing irate in turn, 'when

I offer you thousands for nothing at all? I don't understand such language; and since that is your tone, my lady, I—I can only say, I am your most obedient humble servant—your most obedient humble servant—' he repeated, picking up his hat, and trembling with passion; 'and—and—you'll live to repent, when it is too late, my lady—as you have done, I've a notion, before now!'

She rose from her seat with eyes flashing fire, and signed to him to depart. The look, the gesture, were irresistible; and cowed in spite of himself, he withdrew, venting his rage in audible threats and sarcasms, till the hall door closed violently behind him.

Fortunately, perhaps, for Lady Adelaide, the noise startled poor Mrs. Lyndon from her doze; and it was so long before her alarm could be soothed away, that by the time she had fallen asleep again, clasping her daughter-in-law's hand like a frightened child, the excited nerves of the latter had grown calmer too. She had leisure now to think, and with all her contempt for her suitor and his enmity, she could not shut her eyes to the fact, that she had incensed a dangerous man. If his statement was true, Mr. Lyndon's worry of spirits was but too well accounted for, and she dreaded to think of the trouble hanging over his head. Was it a part of her punishment, that wherever she went, evil was to follow? If so, would it not be better for her, at any cost, to leave her present shelter, and in some neighbourhood where she was unknown, turn her abilities to account, to maintain herself and her son? She thought of this very seriously; if it was true that the Lyndons were in difficulties, they would be less likely to oppose such a measure—at any rate, it would only be right to relieve them as much as she could. For herself, she had only to pray for submission, and strength; that she might take up the burden allotted to her, and do her duty, whatever it might prove to be.

But what was there for her to do? She must consult Henry when he came: he knew the world better than anybody in Cannymoor, and would put her in the way of seeking a situation of some kind or other, whatever he thought her fit for. If she could but put Walter to school, she could live on very little herself, and she would work to the utmost of her strength, either as a governess, or a teacher, or a companion to an invalid—anything for a salary that would cover his expenses. The thought crossed her, as she thus resolved, how little she had valued the comparative rest of her present home; how its cares and vexations had overbalanced its advantages, and filled her with repining, instead of gratitude. Had she but borne in mind, that in the lot she had chosen for herself, her duties must henceforth be found—and that only in the cheerful acceptance of duty could she expect peace and comfort—the past years of her sojourn in Cannymoor would have left her a very

different retrospect. The good she might have done—the little every-day bitternesses she might have avoided—the opportunities lost—the pride and reserve indulged—came now like a cloud upon her conscience ; as if a voice were repeating in her ears, ‘ These three years come I seeking fruit, and finding none. Cut it down : why cumbereth it the ground ? ’

Silently and unnoticed, the large tears gathered and dropped, as she sat with one hand still clasped in the sleeper’s, and her head resting on the other. Could she have had her choice at that moment, it would, she felt, have been far easier to say, ‘ It is enough, now take away my life,’ than to gird up the loins of her mind for hard and thankless labour—who could tell for how long ? But she was learning to submit herself—to let Another decide for her, and to be ready, without repining, to turn back for a forty years’ wandering in the wilderness, if only the pitying Presence would go before her, and bring her over Jordan when her work was done. Her natural bravery of character made this easier than it would have been for one of a more morbid temperament ; and as she inwardly resolved, simply and sincerely, to do her best, she involuntarily lifted her head, as if to dare the worst.

A glass hung just before her, and the reflected rays of the afternoon sun fell on it as she looked up. She started, and no wonder ; for brightened by that gleam just darting through the clouds, there was a face looking full upon hers—so tender, so pitying, so earnest, that but for the glowing passion of the eyes, it might have been that of a loving brother. It was a face she believed at that moment to be hundreds of miles off ; and she involuntarily passed her hand before her own eyes to make sure it was not an illusion. When she looked again, it was gone. Slowly and cautiously, so as not to disturb her charge, she turned round. No one was there ; she fancied she saw the door move, but could not be sure. She listened, but heard nothing. It was very strange, and she could almost have believed she had been dreaming, only she was decidedly wide awake at the time, and the impression was too vivid to be fancy.

The time seemed long to Lady Adelaide, before any one came to relieve her from her post. The dinner hour had been put off on account of the visitors, and it was now past the time when they were expected to arrive. At last Mr. Lyndon came hastily in ; rousing his wife by his entrance, but happily this time without causing her alarm.

‘ So Henry and Emma will not be here till nine ; waited at Lilford on account of the baby—hang the baby ! I wish people would learn to be punctual ; keeping one in suspense in this way ! ’ Then, before Adelaide could inquire how the information had come,

‘What is this on the table, my dear? A map of the Lyndon property? Who brought it here?’

‘Mr. Spindler, sir—I suppose he forgot it.’

What did he come here for? To see *you*?’

‘So it appeared, sir.’ Lady Adelaide came up to the table, and stood close to him, laying her hand on his. Something in her manner struck him, and he turned sharply round to look into her face.

‘Is it possible?’

Her cheeks were burning, and her eyes downcast. He clenched her hand tightly, crushing her slender fingers without remorse. ‘Tell me, in one word, what has he told you? I have a right to know all he said; and I expect it from you, Lady Adelaide, as you are a gentlewoman!’

‘I have no wish but to tell you all, my dear father,’ she said, with a mildness that disarmed his impetuosity, ‘it is only right you should know. Mr. Spindler has made me an offer of marriage.’

Mr. Lyndon groaned, and set his teeth hard. ‘That was not all, I *know*.’

‘No, sir. He took the liberty, in spite of my remonstrances, of entering into your private affairs.’

‘Very good of him—true friendship on his part. What had that to do with his exceedingly modest proposal?’

‘I am ashamed even to mention it to you, sir.’

‘I beg you will keep nothing back—I *will* know all.’

As reluctantly as if it was her own, and in as few words as she could, Lady Adelaide explained Mr. Spindler’s liberal plan. She had not miscalculated its effect on Mr. Lyndon’s irritable temper; his face grew purple with the boiling rage he durst not allow to explode.

‘The little money-getting viper,’ he said, half-choked with passion. ‘I know how long he has been manœuvring for this—ungentlemanly scoundrel, after all the civility he has met with here! I have dreaded it longer than you suppose. And he knows well enough how I am circumstanced; he knows it would be ruinous for me to raise the money now; that I only want time, and we shall be all right. That house will go on again, and Hansell will do well by and by, and Spindler knows it; but he has his own ends to carry out, the rascal! But we must outwit him; it will only cost us a few smooth words; anything to gain time. You were civil to him, I hope?’

‘As civil as I could, sir, until he was insolent.’

‘You do not mean that you let him go away in anger?’

‘I could not help it, sir.’

‘You could not help it! That is the way you have treated all



the people here from the first, with your indifference and reserve ! And now this man, who wants to rob me of the home that has given you shelter, and which it is my pride to improve for your boy, you send him away, provoked to do his worst, when it would have cost you nothing but a little self-control to make him patient, if not friendly. It is very hard, and I must say, very cruel !

‘Dear sir, what could I do ? If you had heard——’

‘Never mind what I might have heard. We know he is no gentleman, and we don’t expect him to behave as one ; we can only look upon him as a crafty enemy, and in war all stratagems are fair. Time—time, is all we want ! It is not too late even now ; I will see him myself : and if you have any regard or feeling for me, any love for your child, any tenderness for your husband’s memory, Adelaide——’

‘Oh heavens !’ she murmured, covering her face with her hands.

‘You will, you will,’ persisted he eagerly, drawing her hands down again, and wringing them in his ; ‘you will overlook his vulgar rudeness, just for once ; you will speak him fair ; you *must*, Adelaide ! I only ask it of you for a short time ; after *that*, you may turn your back upon him as soon as you please, and I shall be the first to say you are right : but just now, till I see how I am situated, and have pulled through the present difficulty, do the only thing you can to help me, and be civil to the rascal, for my sake,—will you ? I don’t ask you to commit yourself—far from it ; but a word or two, or a smile, if necessary, will cost you nothing, and will, at any rate, keep him in uncertainty. Say that you will do what I ask ; it is not much, after all I have done !’

He waited for her answer ; saw the refusal in the indignant light of her eye, turned deadly pale, and reeled to the door.

Adelaide heard a heavy fall outside—flew to the spot, and found him attempting to rise ; as she approached, he motioned her fiercely to stand back—raised himself by a strong effort, made a sign not to alarm his wife, and staggered to a chair, wiping the cold moisture from his forehead. She passed her arm round him, whether he would or not ; entreating him to be composed, and all might yet be well.

‘Yes,’ said he, ‘it may indeed ; for it will soon be over as far as I am concerned. It will kill me to give up this place—I know it—I feel it.’ And he covered his face with a sob that went to his daughter-in-law’s heart. She sank on her knees beside him, and clasped him in her arms. ‘Father, dear father, listen to me—you cannot wish me to sell myself to that man ?’

‘Heaven forbid !’ he exclaimed, raising his head with revived hope. ‘I would as soon set the house on fire with my own hands, as save it at such a cost.’

'Then what am I to do? Only tell me, and I will do it.'

'You promise?' cried he, almost wildly.

'Only be composed, dear sir, and I will promise anything.'

'You promise to do whatever I ask you? No reservation—no drawing back out of false pride, because you fancy yourself affronted? You promise?'

'Yes,' she said, soothingly, for his excitement made her dread to offer a word of opposition.

He revived at once. 'Thank you, thank you—you have saved my life. I felt as if I should have died just this minute—as if it was all over with me. Now I can breathe again, and nobody need know anything about it but ourselves; it would only vex your sisters. God bless you, Adelaide, my own dear daughter. Let them say what they will, you *are* a good daughter to me, and *that* I will maintain before everybody.'

It was her one drop of comfort, for which she thanked God as he left her.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Dear babe, thou daughter of another,  
One moment let me be thy mother!  
An infant's face and looks are thine,  
And sure a mother's heart is mine.—*Wordsworth.*

A POSTCHAISE rattled through Cannymoor just as the church clock was striking nine. It was a fine calm night, with a bright moon.

'I hope Mr. Randolph gave my message,' said Henry, 'or the good people will have had time to be dreadfully uneasy; and nothing is more disagreeable on first arriving, than to be received with a scene. Do you feel your courage oozing out, Emma, now you have got your wish gratified?'

'Do not say it was my wish, Harry. You crushed that at the onset, and this is entirely your own affair, and I am come only to please you. How sweet and fresh the night air is! It will not hurt baby, I hope. Do you think they will be pleased to see her?'

'If I did not think so, I should be apt to turn round and go back again. But to set your mind at rest on that score, I may as well tell you that it was only because my cousin Penelope wrote to request me to do so, that I proposed coming at all.'

'Why did you not tell me that sooner? I should have been spared a great deal of conjecture and doubt. And why did she not invite you openly, instead of asking you to invite yourself?'

'Family mysteries, my love. You will meet with more before you have done, I dare say. Pray do not forget all the grand manœuvres you had planned against we came, which were to work such wonders.'

'Ah, I have thought better of that,' said Emma, with a smile. 'To tell you the honest truth, if I had formed twenty schemes of the kind, now it is come to the point, I do not feel bold enough for one.'

They were now passing under the trees of the Manorhouse, and the cheerful lights gleaming from the windows spoke of hospitable welcome. Emma could not help expressing her delight.

'A real, old-fashioned country-house,—just what I have so often wished to see! How fond you must be of the dear old place, Harry!'

'Humph!' muttered Henry, as he put his head out to direct the post-boy; 'it is little good it has ever done *me*, or seems likely to do.'

In another minute they were at the door. A glowing welcome greeted them, and Emma speedily found herself being passed from one to another, with the liveliest expressions of affection, and kindest reproaches for having so long deferred her visit. She wondered at it now herself, since Harry's uncle and cousins were such kind, hospitable people; and her frank pleasure at her reception, and undisguised admiration of the house, as she was conducted to the rooms prepared for themselves and the child, quite won Penelope's favour, and nearly melted Lucy into tears. They were the least in the world afraid of the baby, and Lucy's feeble attempts to take hold of it were of so unorthodox a fashion, that the small nurserymaid, who adored her charge next to her mistress, looked ready to cry too, and resisted stoutly. Luckily, it was time for the little guest to be in bed, and Emma was soon hurried down to supper—an apology being made *en route* for Mrs. Lyndon, who, for fear of excitement, had been coaxed to retire early.

On entering the dining-room, she perceived Henry standing near the fire, talking to a tall, elegant lady in mourning, and had just time to feel instinctively who this was, when he came forward, and said, 'Emma, let me introduce you to Lady Adelaide;' and she found herself being courteously addressed in what seemed to her one of the softest voices she ever heard. At first she was so taken up with recalling all she had been told and all she had thought of the speaker, that the polite inquiries and remarks fell on her ear without much effect, and were but mechanically answered. When, however, Henry moved away to speak to his cousins, and Lady Adelaide, following him with her eyes, said a few warm grateful words about all she owed to his long-tried kindness and friendship, Emma's senses came back directly, and she looked up in her face with eager interest and good-will. These were by no means diminished on observing, as no one could help doing that night, how pale and worn that face was; how forced were her attempts to

join in the general conversation, still more in the meal—though Lucy reminded her piteously that she had eaten no dinner, and would infallibly faint before morning. Mr. Lyndon, on the contrary, to the great relief of his daughters, appeared in the highest spirits; talked of all they could do to make Emma's visit agreeable—it was too early in the season for excursions, but they had plenty of kind neighbours, and Penelope must lose no time in persuading them to assist in amusing her. Penelope made no objection, but London ladies did not always appreciate their good neighbours as much as they did—they were not fashionable enough for some people. Emma persisted against the imputation of fashionable fastidiousness; and of the friendliness of the neighbourhood she had heard already from Mr. Randolph.

'Ah, he came down part of the way with you. I am so glad he is come back; he is so gentlemanly and agreeable. How did you get acquainted with him?'

'He had business in town,' said Henry, 'and brought me an introduction from Dr. Home.'

'That was what took him off so suddenly, then. Cannymoor was almost in tears at his unexpected flight. I wonder the bells have not rung for his return. How far did he travel with you?'

'As far as Lilford, and then, as the little one was fretful, we thought we had better rest a couple of hours, and he offered to come on here, and bring you word.'

Emma involuntarily glanced at Lady Adelaide, who was sitting opposite, listening attentively; but meeting her eyes, dropped her own in haste and some confusion. How she could ever have dreamed of winning the confidence, and championing the cause of so queenly a personage, was a wonder now to herself; and she only hoped Henry would keep her counsel, and never let her presumptuous designs slip out.

In fact, notwithstanding her utmost efforts, the more Mr. Lyndon attempted to keep up the hilarity of the conversation, and to draw her to take a part in it, the more depressed grew Adelaide's wearied spirits; and the very self-control she exercised to preserve outward composure, gave a coldness to her manner that looked very like hauteur. Emma felt, as others had done, that those grand brilliant eyes looked upon her with a supreme indifference and superiority, as expressive of immeasurable distance as the ray of a fixed star. She was too much of a gentlewoman bred to be afraid of another because higher born; but she could not conceal from herself, that it would require more courage than she was aware of possessing, to make any advances of friendship to one so stately and proud.

In this impression she was confirmed by Penelope, who, unaware of the cause, felt peculiarly provoked with her sister-in-law for

‘displaying airs,’ as she said, ‘just to show off before Mrs. Henry.’ She took an early opportunity of apologizing to the latter, and explaining it was what they all had to put up with, more or less; it was only a little caprice of temper; and Emma wondered how any one could be out of temper with such kind and friendly relations. She said as much to her husband, when they compared notes on their mutual impressions; and received a doubtful grimace in return, that, as often happened, left her under the impression that she was not quite so wise as she had thought herself.

Emma rose early, too eager to realize the pleasure of being actually in the country to sleep late, even after the fatigues of the day before; and had time to strike up a brisk friendship with Walter before breakfast. He was frank and communicative—hoped cousin Henry would put grandpapa into good humour, for it was high time; told her he and his mamma were always up long before any one else, that they might read together, without having anybody to bother them; aunts did bother so sometimes. Oh no, they had no family prayers—they had them at the rectory, though. This was not much consolation to Emma for the disappointment. She had pictured to herself Mr. Lyndon presiding over his household worship. However, she knew better than to let this appear; and Walter, to whom it was no matter of regret, rattled on very much to her amusement, as well as her edification. He opened her eyes to many things she had no idea of: but, prepared to make the best of all, she presented so bright a face at the breakfast-table, that none of the party could help feeling its influence. It made a sunshine of the shadiest corners of the Manorhouse—abounding as it did in that article; even poor Mrs. Lyndon was aware of something pleasant being added to the general stock; and though in a great mist about her nephew’s identity, calling him by every name except his own, but rather inclining to the belief that he was her cousin Thomas, from Newfoundland—soon began to turn her placid, puzzled face in the direction whence sounded that joyous laugh, so unlike anything she was in the habit of hearing, and to listen whenever Emma spoke, with a smile or nod of approval to her daughters. She was even roused sufficiently to call Penelope, as it were, aside, after breakfast, to beg her to be particular about the fish for dinner, as her cousin Thomas was so very partial to fish, he never dined without it. It was the reason of his going to Newfoundland, she believed—Thomas was so particularly partial to fish! She was very nearly working herself up into a flurry about it, when a happy diversion occurred in the shape of the baby, who came in to be admired, and who, taking umbrage at some affront unknown, allowed no voice but her own to be heard for the next half-hour. This business at last got over, Emma must

be taken over the house, and shown all the treasures and heirlooms, and be instructed in the past glories of the family; in all which she took such hearty interest and pleasure, that her new relations were fairly won. By and by, just when she thought to go out, and 'realize the fact of being in the country' out of doors as well as in, the neighbours began to call; and so warm was the curiosity to see 'Mrs. Henry,' that one party had no sooner taken leave, than another came, till the best of the day was gone. Henry, who was entrapped by the first detachment, made a dexterous escape from the rest, and resigning his wife to her inevitable destiny, took a long, scrambling walk with Walter, the only one permitted to avoid the visitors. Much as he enjoyed the fresh air of the moors, with all the keen delight of a Londoner, he could not refrain from a burst of spleen as soon as he got back to the Manorhouse, at the ill-timed civility that had prevented Emma's sharing the pleasure. But this she would not allow; it was all friendly good-will, and to be received as such; the ladies, young and old, seemed so ready to welcome her, it was plain how much Harry and his relations were respected. If their manners were a little singular, it was all part of the pleasure of the country to see new phases of character. They had admired the baby, too, to her heart's content, and she was to see the schools, and be introduced to some of the poor people—real cottagers, such as she had so often wished to visit; and she had seen the rector—such a winning, kind old man—and in short, though not denying some of the sayings and doings in Cannymoor amused her, she could see nothing to find fault with, if she tried.

'You have an angel's own happy temper,' was Henry's compliment in reply; upon which she stopped him to make a confession. One person she did not think she ever could be friends with—and that was Lady Adelaide.

'Rather an early day to form such a judgment,' suggested Henry.

'Not when I see her, Harry, among all those good-natured people, looking so reserved and silent—Mr. Lyndon watching her every minute, as if he was afraid of her doing something to affront them. It seemed to strike your cousin Penelope, too, for she said she had never seen your uncle so anxious before; he seems uneasy the moment she is out of his sight. Your cousin says she believes she really cannot help it—it is her nature, and she has many good points: but, Harry, all her beauty and grace would never make up to me for a cold, proud heart.'

'Thank you for correcting me, my love,' said Henry. 'I was wrong—you are *not* an angel, but only a good, amiable woman, liable to make a mistake. I do not like you the worse for that—on the contrary.'

‘Now, Harry! was it not yourself who first warned me of her peculiar temper?’

‘I never said it was not, my love.’

‘Then where is my mistake?’

‘You will stand a better chance of correcting it, if I leave it to yourself to discover.’

Emma pondered over this, as she always did over her husband’s dry sayings; and ashamed of her own hasty judgment, made two or three attempts in the course of the evening to draw Lady Adelaide into conversation. The answers were always to the purpose, well-bred, and sensible, and so far, superior to the general style of remark among her new acquaintance; but Emma saw, or fancied she saw, that it was by an effort she fixed her attention, and that, on the first interruption, she relapsed into reverie. All her politeness could not veil the fact of her mind being full of something else; and nothing so soon damps the zeal, as the dread of being wished away. Emma gave it up, and went to the piano, where, in spite of its being rather the worse for wear, she played and sang, not in first-rate style, but pleasantly enough to be agreeable; took her turn to cut into the family rubber, with a happy unconsciousness of its perils, and thanks to her good cards, won golden opinions from Mr. Lyndon, her partner; especially as she was as eager to win as he could be, and never relaxed her attention for a moment.

‘It is of no use,’ she said to her husband, at night. ‘I can make myself at home with all the others; but Lady Adelaide reminds me so forcibly of Mr. Randolph’s story, I could never love her, if I lived with her a twelvemonth. I can understand now why he is so bitter.’

‘Do you know what she said to me of you, Emma, while you were at cards?’

‘No. Did she think me very trifling and silly?’

‘She would scarcely have told *me* so, if she did. She said you seemed to carry a bright atmosphere about you, and saw everything through its medium. I am afraid I must add—except herself.’

‘I am very sorry, Harry, if I am wrong; but what can I do?’

The house had been quiet some time, when Emma was awoken by the crying of her baby in the next room. She was by its bed in an instant, and tried to hush it off again, but without success. The child seemed suffering and unwell, and the young mother remembered with alarm, that she had been told there was no doctor within five miles. She did not like to disturb Henry, whose unaccustomed fatigue made him sleep sounder than usual; her little maid knew rather less than herself, and was much more frightened; she had seen enough to know that the Miss Lyndons’ notions touching infants were of the crudest order; she felt something ought to be

done immediately, but dreaded doing the wrong thing. How she longed to be at home again, with her own doctor ten doors off, and her mother ready to come at a moment's notice, no tongue could tell; but in the midst of her perplexity and distress, she heard a step in the passage. She opened the door in eager hope that it might be one of the servants; it was Lady Adelaide.

The extreme surprise in Emma's face made her begin to apologize more nervously than might have been expected from one so self-possessed; it was a great liberty she had taken, but she had heard the baby crying, and could not rest till she knew what was the matter, and whether she could be of any use. She had had some little experience, and if she might be allowed——?

There was no resisting the genuine motherly sympathy, if Emma had wished so to do; but she was only too grateful for the presence of a counsellor on whom she could rely; and from the moment her baby was in Adelaide's arms, she forgot every word that had ever been breathed to her prejudice.

Fortunately, Adelaide understood both the evil and the cure, and had remedies and resources at hand. She was soon able to relieve the young mother's anxiety, cheering her as much by her manner as by her prompt, active measures; till Emma could hardly believe it could be the same individual she had felt so much afraid of downstairs. When, however, everything had been done that experience and tenderness could suggest, and there was nothing to do but to watch quietly as the relieved child dropped asleep, the hopeful expression that had lightened Emma's vague dread, gradually faded into one of such deep, thoughtful sadness, that the latter was seized with sudden terror. Leaning across the bed, on either side of which they were seated, she whispered, imploringly—if she thought the baby worse—or what?

'Worse!' repeated Adelaide, surprised; 'do you not see how quietly she is asleep?'

'Yes, and I felt easy—but your look frightened me. Oh! how cruel—how inconsiderate I am! indeed, I had forgotten—and how could I forget?'

It was no wonder that she should, in her own absorbing anxiety; but not the less remorseful did she feel, when Adelaide, whose heart had been aching as if it would burst, ever since that infant came into the house, buried her face in its pillow—her tears gushing silently through her fingers, as she vainly endeavoured to keep them back. The very noiselessness of her grief, mindful even then not to disturb their charge, moved Emma more than the most passionate vehemence would have done; and she longed to throw herself on her neck, entreat her pardon, and give her such comfort as sympathy and good-will could bestow. But the necessity of remain-



ing still obliged her to wait till Adelaide should regain composure, which was not long. She raised her head, softly smoothed the moistened pillow, and glanced deprecatingly at Emma, as if feeling apology to be due.

‘You must forgive me . . . I do not often behave like this . . . but perhaps you know, or can imagine——’

‘God comfort you!’ whispered Emma, holding out her hand. It was readily taken, and its warm pressure returned; a silent pledge of friendship and confidence, which neither would have lightly given—and neither ever violated.

The child slept on, and Adelaide pressed the tired mother to go back to her bed, and allow her to sit there and watch. If there was the least return of indisposition, of which she saw no likelihood, the nurse should call her directly. Emma resisted; why was Lady Adelaide to lose her rest?

‘My rest! I have hardly known what it is for weeks. I seem to have lost the faculty of sleep; and nothing will do me so much good—indeed, I am in earnest—as to stay quietly here, and watch this dear child. No; do not be afraid I shall give way again; it is the greatest comfort I can have.’

Her urgency overcame all scruples; the little nurse was ordered into bed, and her mistress returned to hers; where after making many resolutions to lie awake, or, at any rate, to relieve guard in an hour or two, she slept the sound sleep of weariness till the sun was shining into her eyes. Starting up then, with a guilty feeling of negligence, the first glad sound she heard was her darling’s voice, much too merry to admit of alarm; the skill of her doctress was amply justified by the result, and nothing remained of the past night’s terrors, but the friend they had so unexpectedly made.

‘What can you be studying so diligently, my love?’ asked Henry, as he looked in before going down to breakfast, and saw her absorbed by a fragment of paper which the maid had picked up near the baby’s bed. As she did not answer, he glanced over her shoulder, and there was a world of meaning in the pressure she gave his hand, as they read together the following stanzas, written in pencil, and bearing as their title, the single word,

‘RAMAH.’

They tell me that I should not grieve  
 A loss so long gone by;  
 That blessings reft new blessings leave,  
 That should their place supply.  
 I cannot say it is not so,  
 To murmur may be sin;  
 But the grief was given long ago—  
 When will the rest begin?

I look upon my boy's bright face—  
 My heart warms to his smile ;  
 But not the less that empty place  
 Lies cold within the while.  
 I see him bound o'er heath and sod,  
 Till all my pulses thrill ;  
 But the little foot that never trod—  
 Oh ! when will *that* be still ?

All other things must suffer change,  
 However fair before ;  
 And hearts grow cold, and voices strange,  
 And love is love no more ;  
 The old home fire may quench its gleams,  
 The dearest friends forget ;  
 But the little face that haunts my dreams,  
 Has never altered yet !

It never smiles, it never speaks,  
 Its calm eye rests on mine,  
 And softly, round the gentle cheeks,  
 The fair curls float and twine.  
 The placid look is never stirred  
 By restlessness or pain ;  
 And yet, how often have I heard  
 That wailing cry again !

Sometimes when all are hushed in sleep,  
 And I awake alone,  
 I feel the tiny fingers creep,  
 And nestle in my own.  
 I listen to the low, faint breath,  
 Yet know it is not there :  
 O Memory ! thou art strong as death—  
 But far more hard to bear !

Emma looked up in her husband's face as she folded the paper ;  
 and though neither said a word, they were of one mind on that  
 subject from that moment.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

Her heart is but o'ercharged—she will recover.—*Shakespeare.*

'AND SO,' said Dr. Home to his guest, 'you are really bent on giving poor old Cannymoor a new school-house, and letting in all the new lights upon our dark understandings, are you, Maurice ? Well, it is not for me to hinder you, or to deny we are rather in want of them. There is no better way to bring a blessing on your basket and your store than by giving God and his poor a liberal tenth. But hark ye, my fine fellow ; it is rather the fashion in schools, now-a-days, to ignore the Bible and the Catechism, and to give the youngsters air-pumps and microscopes, and I don't know-what-all

instead. Now, an air-pump is a very good thing, and a very clever thing, in its way, and for its proper work ; but all the pistons in the world will not drive foolishness out of the heart of a child, or the fear of God into it ; and the best microscope that ever was made won't show human nature its secret faults ; and so, till they can, I am for keeping them in their own place, and not for putting them in that of another. Teach the lads and lasses as much as you please of the creation and its wonders ; but stick to the old ways of showing them the Creator too ; or it will be no better than a painted panorama to them, instead of the real world in which their work must be done. I have a little book here,' he added, taking down a small brown volume, well known to fame, 'which, modern as it is, deserves to stand up among the oldest and wisest for the weighty matter it holds in so little compass. I'll put a mark in a passage that struck me the other day, and which I should like all you theorists on education to lay to heart, showing the distinction between to *instruct* and to *educate* :—The one puts in—the other draws out.\* So now you may just put as much useful knowledge as you please, or can, into my poor children's brains, with all your steam-engines and forcing-pumps ; and leave the drawing out of their inner life to the machinery of God and the Church.'

Willing as he was to believe in any amount of zeal in a good cause, it did rather puzzle the rector to see the amount of energy his friend threw into this. As he told them at the Manorhouse, one would suppose he was canvassing for a general election—galloping twice to Shareham and back in one day, to consult land-agents—calling on all the farmers and holders of land—poring over a map of the parish and surrounding property as if he were pricking off his longitude on a chart : he was so busy, there was no getting a word out of him. It remained to be seen how much they should all be the wiser for it in the end !

One thing Mr. Randolph had accomplished in the short space of time that he had been thus occupied, which, with one unwilling exception, nobody had ever succeeded in doing before ; he had won the somewhat eccentric heart of Mr. Ousel. Whether it was some well-timed hints about singing classes, and concerts for the improvement of the operatives, in which original works might be introduced under the supervision of a man of taste, that had first prepossessed that gentleman in favour of the new school-house and lecture-room—certain it is that he entered into the scheme with enthusiasm, and willingly agreed to dispose of the necessary ground, which happened to be in his possession. The next step, though a very sudden one, was to discover that he and Maurice Randolph were kindred spirits, born under one star ; and our friend had no

\* Dean Trench, *On the Study of Words*.

choice but to accept the proffered confidence and intimacy as cordially as he could, or affront the susceptible genius for ever. He preferred the former; and though the devotion of his musical Horatio was rather too rapid to be reciprocated quite as fast as it deserved, he proved himself no inefficient ally in more ways than one.

It was the fourth day of Henry's visit, as he failed not to remark—his days being very few, and proportionably to be valued. As far as any good to his uncle was concerned—the secret object for which he had come—he began to think he might as well have stayed at home. Mr. Lyndon evaded all attempts to draw him into conversation on his affairs; his recent irritability had given place to a forced state of high spirits, which could not, however, conceal from those who knew him, that he was in a perpetual tremor of watchfulness and expectation; starting at every unusual sound, and turning red at the sudden entrance of a visitor. The only person who could have accounted for this, and who shared it in no small degree, was Lady Adelaide; and he was in a fever of uneasiness whenever she was out of his sight. So closely did he watch her movements, in the dread of her revealing the cause of his perturbation, that she could scarcely find a moment to speak to Henry alone, even on her own private affairs. An opportunity, however, occurred on the present afternoon. Mr. Lyndon, believing Henry meant to accompany his wife and Penelope to return the visits of the neighbours, had taken care to request Lady Adelaide would wait at home till his return from a short walk he had to take, on a little matter of business, when he should be glad of her arm for a stroll together. In this she, of course, acquiesced; and while she was walking up and down the lawn, Henry came and joined her.

'I thought I should never have a word with you,' he said, as he offered his arm. 'You are in such request, it requires a little diplomacy to secure an audience. But I had better not allude to diplomacy—my own having proved such an utter failure, that I am afraid you cannot look at me with patience.'

'Indeed, it was no fault of yours; you did all you could, and the failure was owing to a train of accidental circumstances against which no foresight could provide. I only regret you had so much trouble for nothing.'

'Do not say for *nothing*; I have good hopes of recovering our lost ground, with a little patience and plain speaking. Lord Delaunay cannot stay abroad for ever, or if he does, there are ways and means of following him.'

'It will be of no use, Henry. It is not to be. So has it always been with every effort I have made. A kind friend in India under-

took to plead my cause on his return, and I lived for months on that hope—he died on the passage home. One of my relations, who loved me from my infancy, and whom my mother loved dearly, made an earnest effort to accomplish the reconciliation: and just as she had persuaded her to pay her a visit, hoping that her personal entreaties and argument might prevail, she was seized with paralysis, and never spoke again. Every letter fails—every mediator is baffled. I accept my sentence, and will struggle against it no more.’

‘I am sorry to hear you speak like this,’ said Henry, kindly; ‘but if you despair for yourself, you must allow your friends to hope for you. One thing is very certain now, that your cousin, Miss Conway, is your enemy—and rather an awkward one to deal with. You cannot be too careful how you communicate with her at all. Excuse my saying that you are no match for her in this matter.’

‘Why should she be my enemy?’ said Adelaide, mournfully; ‘I never injured her when I had the power—and now I could not, if I would.’

‘She evidently thinks otherwise, and it does her discernment credit. If she wishes to keep all your mother’s regard to herself, it is for this sound reason—that, ready as you are to make any sacrifice for a reconciliation, you know, and so does she, when Lady Delaunay pardons at all, she will pardon to the uttermost—as I hope to see her do—if I live.’

She pressed his arm; her heart was too full to speak.

‘But now,’ he went on, after a quiet observation of her face, ‘what do you say to our making your old acquaintance—a very gentlemanly and sensible man he is—Mr. Randolph—useful in this affair? He has been very hospitably received at your mother’s table, and even admitted into her confidence on matters of business. As an old friend of your family, he would have opportunities and means of explanation, which a stranger could not have; and after the mischief he has unwittingly done, it would be a real boon to allow——’

‘Impossible,’ interrupted Lady Adelaide, struggling to speak with calmness; ‘quite impossible, Henry. Do not mention it again.’

‘Indeed? His character, then, is not what I suppose?’

‘His character needs no voucher of mine; it is honourable, it is generous; of whatever confidence or distinction may have been shown him, he is in every respect worthy; but to interfere in my private affairs, is what I could not permit for an instant, and which, I am sure, he understands his own position and mine too well, ever to entertain the idea of doing.’

A slight smile he could not suppress, played round the lawyer's lips for a moment; and in the irritated state of her nerves, it was more than she could bear. She withdrew her arm from his, and faced him suddenly.

'Henry! I do not know what you may have heard—what you may have imagined; but this I can tell you—and I expect to be believed—I would earn my bread by my needle, or in service, if there were no other means of doing it, and count it no degradation; but lie under an obligation to that man—highly as I respect his character—I will never submit to while I live.'

He looked at her steadily; not at all liking the flush on her temples, and the fevered light of her eye.

'Ah, Lady Adelaide, if you only tell your legal adviser *half* your affairs, how can all his zeal and pains do you any good? I had hoped to deserve entire confidence by giving entire fidelity, but I see I was mistaken.'

'Oh, no, no!' she faltered, blushing and agitated; 'there is nothing you might not—should not know; you are my best and truest friend——'

Walter leaped upon her before the tremulous sentence was finished, and very nearly threw her down. 'I beg your pardon, mamma, I do indeed; but grandpapa is in such a hurry, that made me run.'

'Is he come in? Is he waiting?' asked his mother, somewhat startled.

'Yes, and old Spindler too. He wants to speak to you this minute.'

Henry met her eye, and was dismayed by its wild glance of terror. 'I *will* know what all this means,' he said to himself; and having sent Walter racing off into the shrubbery 'to see if the little one was being kept on the sunny side,' he followed Adelaide, who was already hastening towards the house. 'What is it? You look quite ill—will you not allow me at least to try and assist you, even if I fail again?'

'Oh, do not detain me!' she said, still hurrying on. 'You will drive him frantic by delay—it may risk his life. If you could but induce him to explain it all to you, you might save us both; but I have promised to be silent and to obey, and I must—I am coming, sir!' for Mr. Lyndon's impatient face at that moment appeared at the window, and his eager gesture showed how even this trifling delay had excited him. Directly he saw her approaching, however, he drew back, and signed her to follow. Not till they were alone in the hall, did he stop to speak. Then he turned, and took her by the hand.

'My dear Adelaide, you know what you promised me——'

‘I promised to obey you, sir. I know you will ask nothing of me unworthy the name I bear—the honour committed to my charge. What am I to do?’

He hesitated—moved by the gentle dignity of her manner.

‘Why, I met Spindler just now, and he was all on the high horse, as I expected; but I talked him over, and asked him in, as if nothing had happened: and—in short, he is in the library, where I left him, under pretence of finding his map that he left behind him; and I thought, if you were to go in now, in your own ladylike way, and try what you can do towards conciliating him, you might soon make him agree to some arrangement that would give us time to get rid of him altogether. You do not suppose,’ he added, hurriedly, with a forced smile, ‘that I wish you to put yourself in his power for a moment: I want you to have him in yours. I am sure no one could resist you that you were resolved to win.’

Lady Adelaide blushed over cheek and brow with indignant shame. She felt as if she should never look up again—as if the earth was not deep enough to hide her humiliation. Her downcast eyes and compressed lips betrayed the strong disapprobation respect would not allow her to express in words; and Mr. Lyndon, afraid he had gone too far, hastened to assure her he was only in jest—jesting, he could truly say, with a heavy heart: he never meant to wound her feelings; all he asked was that she would do what she could, the method he left to her own excellent sense and discretion. This was some relief, and she promised to do her best, and went at once to the library—lest her courage, like that of Acres, should ooze out by delay.

Her entrance was evidently unexpected by the unwelcome visitor; for as she opened the door, he started up, with a very red face, from a stooping posture, hustling into his pocket the folding-rule with which he had been taking the dimensions of the apartment. He looked peculiarly awkward at the detection, as well as on finding himself again in her presence after his recent ignominious dismissal; but while he was stammering over his bow and speech, she advanced towards him with that winning grace, which, Mr. Lyndon had truly said, was so difficult to resist.

‘Mr. Spindler, you were rather hard upon me the last time we met, and I was hasty towards you in return. Let us both admit as much, and forget on either side whatever would prevent your appearing in this house on the same friendly terms as before.’

He bowed two or three times while she was speaking, but paused before making a reply. The moment he found she was prepared to conciliate, his cunning took the alarm. So proud as she was, there must be some plan to circumvent him in this sudden change,

and he resolved to take up a strong position at once, and rake the enemy's line.

'Madam,' he began, rather stiffly, and with the tone of an injured man, 'that you admit you were hasty ought to be enough to satisfy any one. I am bound to be satisfied, and of course I am. I shall be happy to forget it all as soon as I can. It will depend upon your ladyship how soon that will be; this minute, if you will.'

He made a step forward with curved body and extended hand. Lady Adelaide's lips grew white, in spite of the iron with which she had strung her nerves; but she suffered him to touch the tips of her fingers without any visible shudder, and stood stately and erect as a statue. Her powers of conciliation would go no further. Mr. Spindler, however, needed very little reassuring; he felt he had the advantage, and pursued it.

'Won't your ladyship sit down? We could talk then more at our ease. No?—rather not?—just as you please. Your ladyship's will must always be mine. I am to understand, then, you no longer resent my little scheme—eh, my lady—do you?'

'As you may suppose, sir, by my being here, I am at liberty to resent nothing.'

'Ah, true. You have found out that Abel Spindler is not a man to be sneered at—is he, my lady? And so you have thought better of it, and will not be so hardhearted as you tried to make me believe?' added he, with softened gallantry.

Lady Adelaide kept her temper.

'I have thought certainly of what you said, sir, very seriously; it is, indeed a serious matter to me if any resentment for my behaviour should be the means of dissolving your friendship with Mr. Lyndon; but if you will allow us time——'

'Time? Oh, that's it, my lady? I was in too great a hurry to come to the point, I suppose? I am not used to the fashionable ways of arranging matters; you must teach them to me by degrees. Certainly, I don't want to hurry you. Three months, four, five, or even six months, if you like; a bill at such and such a date, with proper interest allowed, of course, in the way of civil speaking, and so forth, you know—you *take* me, my lady—eh? A little joke is no great offence among friends, eh?'

'No offence among friends, sir, certainly; but I am afraid you mistake my meaning. No lapse of time could possibly effect the answer I gave you the other day. I allude to the subject once more, that it may be closed for ever. I should only be deceiving you were I to speak otherwise.'

'Then what on earth do you mean about wanting time?' cried he, snappishly.



'Time, sir, to defray all that is due to you, which we will do, if health and strength are given——'

'Oh, that's what you mean? That is what Mr. Lyndon sent you in to say, was it? He just feels he is in an awkward corner, and wants to get out of it with a few soft words. I am not to be managed quite so easily. We all know ladies protest they never mean to marry again, until they see a chance of a good settlement; and so far as *that* goes, my lady——'

'Stop, sir; I have told you I am in no position to resent your treatment. You can therefore no more insult than you could strike me.'

'I don't want to insult you; quite the contrary. I want our interests to be one, as I showed you; and since it is plain speaking you like, my Lady Adelaide Lyndon, I tell you, once for all, my mind is made up. Carry my point I *will*, if it cost me half I have in the world.'

She smiled in quiet scorn. He understood the smile, and it lashed his little soul into rage.

'I know what that means—I know that contemptuous curl of the lip, my lady—I have seen it before. You think yourself of a superior race of beings to us, I know very well; but it strikes me, and may strike other people, that a man who, from seven shillings a-week (which was all I began life upon, in the warehouse of young Ousel's grandfather), has saved, and worked, and scraped, and contrived, till he has realized a handsome fortune, and is looked up to and respected, and owes nobody a farthing, but could buy up half-a-dozen beggarly peers—I say, it strikes me that such a man is quite as good, if not better, than a lady of quality who has not a sixpence to bless herself with, and whose own grandee flesh and blood don't seem to think her worth speaking to!'

'You dare, sir, use such language to Lady Adelaide Lyndon?' retorted a deep stern voice; and Randolph, who had opened the door unobserved by either, in time to hear this last speech, stepped in between the two. 'You dare, Mr. Abel Spindler, offer such an affront to such a lady, and suppose it is to be done with impunity? Apologize this instant, sir—or not even the respect due to her presence will prevent my using stronger arguments to convince your understanding!'

Mr. Spindler, confounded by this unlooked-for interposition, stared at him without answering; Lady Adelaide, scarcely less taken by surprise, stood motionless. Randolph turned to her with the deepest respect, requesting her pardon for the intrusion; Mr. Lyndon would explain the reason, and in the meanwhile he hoped she would allow him to relieve her from the presence of a

person, who had shown himself quite unworthy of the honour of hers.

‘And pray, sir, by what right do you take upon yourself to interfere between her ladyship and me?’ stammered Mr. Spindler, recovering from his first surprise. ‘We have our own private affairs to settle, that concern nobody but ourselves, and will thank you not to meddle with what you don’t understand. Ask her ladyship, and she will tell you the same.’

Randolph looked at Lady Adelaide; she seemed ready to sink into the earth.

‘Ay, ay,’ continued Mr. Spindler, thrusting his hands into his pockets; ‘she knows better than to contradict me—she knows how much is in my power; let her deny it if she can!’

‘It is true—quite true, Mr. Randolph,’ said Lady Adelaide, speaking slowly, and with much difficulty; ‘he has far too much in his power, and he makes a cruel use of it. Oh! thank God, here is my father!’ And as Mr. Lyndon entered, she sprang forwards, and flung herself in his arms, hiding her face on his shoulder, and weeping bitterly.

‘My love! my dearest Adelaide!’ he began soothingly, alarmed at the violence of her agitation; ‘be composed! it is all over, and you did all you could—’

‘I did—I did—and to no purpose; only to prove worse insult. Oh, sir, what have I done that you should expose me to this?’

He tried to explain, but she seemed incapable of hearing; she only knew that there was a confusion of several voices speaking at once, and some strange sound that she could not account for; and then that she was being supported into another room, and laid on a sofa; and when she opened her eyes, there was no one by her but Henry.

She tried to recover herself, and sat up; but a strange feeling of illness came over her the instant she moved, and he saw it so plainly that he hastened to relieve her mind.

‘I am afraid you have had a troublesome visitor,’ he said, seating himself by her side, and speaking as cheerfully as he could; ‘and if we had only known it a little sooner, you would have escaped this *mauvais quart d’heure*; but it will not be repeated. My uncle has told me everything, and he will soon be released from Spindler’s fangs, I trust, for ever.’

‘Is it possible? Henry, you are robbing your wife and child. You must not do it.’

‘I would not, believe me. No man would be justified in so doing. And even if I did, it would not be of much use.’

‘Then how——?’

'Well, a friend has offered the necessary accommodation to my uncle on the most liberal terms, and as soon as the proper forms have been gone through, Spindler will be paid. You can guess who it is, I dare say.'

She pressed her hand to her burning forehead; she felt she could not bear much more.

'With all your unwillingness to accept obligation,' added Henry, smiling, 'I think you will prefer this creditor to the other. And you must allow me to say, that I, for one, feel that so friendly an act done in so liberal and gentlemanly a manner, deserves a little gratitude from us all.'

'Perhaps it does,' she said, in a low voice; 'and I will try to feel it, for my father's sake—though it is my sentence of banishment from his roof. You know what I told you just now, Henry, and now I tell you this—remain here beholden to Mr. Randolph's generosity for a home, is what I cannot and will not do.'

'And what do you propose to do, then, my dear Lady Adelaide?'

'To earn my own bread, Henry.'

'And Walter's education?'

'I will earn that too. There are ways and means for a woman who is not afraid of work, whether it be for her head or her hands; and to you and your dear wife I look for advice how to begin. Do not think this is a sudden caprice. It is a fixed resolution, which the events of to-day have only helped to confirm.'

'I never accused you of caprice; I know no woman less open to the imputation; and I am now, as ever, at your service. But before you quite make up your mind, as you honour my wife by including her in our counsels, will you object to hearing what she has to say on the subject?'

'I have no objection to listen to one so sensible and kind; but my mind is made up fully. I have borne a great deal; I have shown I could bear more, if necessary; but *this*'—her hands were locked convulsively together on her knee—'*this* would be too much. God forgive me if it is my sinful pride; but I can take anything patiently from Maurice Randolph but his pity—and his purse.'

Something in the tone with which these words were spoken, made Henry put his hand quietly on her wrist. He was startled by the quick, fierce throbs.

'You are tired and unwell,' he said, kindly. 'Let me persuade you to go and lie down in your own room, and keep perfectly quiet. It will do you good.'

'It might,' she said, impatiently; 'but quiet is a luxury forbidden to illness in this house. Never be ill here, Henry, if you can help it; no, nor wretched either, if you would not grow

desperate—for there is a species of kindness that, like some tender mercies we read of, is more cruel than neglect.’

Henry could not contradict her: they sat in silence for a few minutes; then, with a sudden renewal of feverish eagerness, she insisted on learning all the particulars of Mr. Randolph’s interposition—how he came to know anything of the matter, and what brought him just at the same time as Mr. Spindler. Finding opposition only made her worse, Henry told her in a few words all he knew; Mr. Randolph had accidentally overheard a threat of Mr. Spindler’s while waiting in the library, where he had been shown, till Mr. Lyndon’s return—the day of their arrival. He had learned, during his negotiations about the school, further particulars, which had convinced him Spindler’s design was to ruin the Squire altogether; he had seen them that afternoon walking towards the Manorhouse together, and hurried by a short cut through the grounds, in hopes of being in time to save her from annoyance. ‘Just as you went in, he came up, and told me what was going on, and his plan of putting a stop to it. We went instantly in search of my uncle, and never was a man more thankful for a reprieve. He tells me the misery he has been living in lately was almost more than his brain could endure.’

Lady Adelaide could well believe what she was feeling herself; but before she answered, to Henry’s great relief, the ladies came home. He hastened to take his wife aside, and to confide to her his apprehensions, and the peculiar difficulties of the case. ‘Try what you can do, my love, to calm her, and keep her quiet, or you will have to nurse her soon, in return for her doctoring the baby.’

Emma promised to do her best; but fearful of appearing to intrude beyond her province, waited to see what other people would do. There was no danger, she soon found, of Adelaide’s case being neglected. Directly she had been convicted, though reluctantly, of a severe headache, she was besieged with questions as to how she had got it—what she had been doing—what she had *not* been doing—and what she was going to do. To escape this cross-examination, she at last consented to go to her room; and Emma, who had compassionately refrained from suggesting or asking anything, hoped she would at least be left there in quiet. But quick was a medicine unknown in the family pharmacopœia. It would have been thought the most heartless, inattentive thing in the world not to go up and down stairs every half-hour, to see if she wanted anything, or to talk over her case at the foot of her bed, and first Penelope went to persuade her to try a new pungent scent Mrs. Grayling had specially recommended for the nerves; and then Mr. Lyndon, notwithstanding Henry’s urgent remonstrances, would go in to see how she was; and when there, could not help

thanking her for all she had done and tried to do, and expatiating on the very handsome conduct of Mr. Randolph; and after this was over, Lucy crept in to offer her cordial, which had done her such wonderful good once before, and with tears in her eyes besought her to take only one table-spoonful every three hours. Then a visitor happening to call, and hearing the news, not only left a civil message of regret and suggestion, that must be carried up instantly, and duly answered, but spread the information to all whom it didn't concern—the consequence being a succession of inquiries and offers of immediate cure all the evening, not one of which was spared Lady Adelaide—and Henry wondered at her warning no longer.

‘It comes to this,’ he said to his wife at night: ‘I shall have medical advice for her to-morrow, and you must take her in hand. Her nerves have been overwrought, and we shall have her in a brain fever before we know where we are.’

Emma shared his uneasiness, and was often awake in the night, listening; but as all was perfectly still, she hoped for the best. As she was leaving her room in the morning, she found Walter wandering disconsolately about the gallery. She asked after his mother. ‘I don't know, I am sure, cousin Emma: she began to get up, and now she is lying down again, and asked me not to kiss her.’

Emma hesitated a moment, and then went quietly to Adelaide's door. Her gentle knock being unanswered, she entered unbidden, and found her, as she feared, completely prostrated with the agony of nervous headache, which she had been enduring all night, sooner than appeal to such help as had been offered her by day. She attempted to apologize when Emma came in, and to beg she would not trouble herself; but was too helpless with pain to offer any resistance, and Mrs. Henry Lyndon felt she had stood on ceremony long enough. She began at once to put cold applications on the burning temples; and the gentle touch, and the quiet, unobtrusive movements, soothed poor Adelaide's spirits as much as the relief of the remedies. All her skill, however, could only slightly alleviate the evil; the fevered pulse was too high to yield without decided treatment; and Henry, without asking leave, set off, after a hasty breakfast, to borrow Randolph's horse, which had been offered him the day before—promising to bring a doctor back with him, if there was one within twenty miles.

Of course there was no small excitement in the house, when this was known. Mr. Lyndon, in an agony of remorse, confessed to Penelope all that had happened; and Penelope, her whole soul in a tumult with the news, partly resentment at having been kept in the dark, and partly exultation at the defeat of Mr. Spindler's

audacious scheme—ran eagerly upstairs with her keys and house-books in her hand, to talk it all over with her sister-in-law. Lady Adelaide heard the well-known step and voice, and looked up imploringly at Emma, who understood very well what that meant, and slipped out, with a great deal of inward trepidation under her most winning exterior, to stop Miss Lyndon midway. She explained that Lady Adelaide was in such a feverish state, that any temptation to talk was a risk ; and as she was less likely to do so with a comparative stranger, if Miss Lyndon would trust her, *she* would sit with her sister, and Penelope would perhaps be so very good as to keep an eye on dear baby. She had promised the nurse a receipt for that particularly nice jelly—would it be too much trouble to teach her how it was made this morning ? Miss Lyndon was all compliance, and rather pleased than otherwise ; it was quite true, poor dear Adelaide *would* talk and excite herself ; it was no use telling her to be quiet—she always *would* have her own way.

‘Well, she must have ours now,’ said Emma, cheerfully ; and she hastened back to relieve the mind of her patient. She saw her parched lips moving, and bending over her, heard her murmur, ‘Help me not to *think*.’ The overwrought brain could not rest ; and past scenes, returning in vivid minuteness of detail—calculations of expenses which never would come correct—imaginary conversations full of convincing argument—and harassing conjectures as to what might have been the result, if this had been done, and that left undone—had been wearying it through those long, sleepless hours, till it was within a hair’s-breadth of delirium ; and she knew it. And Emma knew it too ; but she concealed her alarm, and sat by her side in the darkened room, occasionally bathing her forehead, but mostly with her hand in that of the sufferer. Now and then, as she thought she could hear it, a promise from the Scripture, a verse of a favourite hymn, a word or two of prayer for help and patience, in the soft, heart-felt tones of tender sympathy, stole on the silence ; and never failed to draw a responsive pressure from the hand of the listener. Adelaide Lyndon felt as if a ministering spirit had been sent to keep hers from sinking ; and humbled and broken as it was, the consolation could not have come at a more seasonable moment. It gave her strength to endure, and assisted her naturally resolute will to control, in some degree, the excitement of her nerves. She had lain quiet so long, at one time, that her nurse had begun to hope she had fallen asleep, till she suddenly looked up to ask Emma if she knew anybody who wanted a governess ?

‘No,’ said Emma, taking care not to show how much she was startled, ‘nobody.’

‘I have been thinking it well over, and calculating,’ she went on hurriedly, ‘and I feel sure with what I have, and the salary I might expect to receive, Walter might go to school this summer. But he must have new clothes; I have just finished his shirts;’ and she tried to raise her head to look round for her work, but the shoot of pain was too severe, and she sank back on the pillow. Emma was afraid she was really beginning to wander. Adelaide, as if guessing her thoughts, emphatically assured her she was quite in earnest; she meant to earn her own bread in future, and *nobody* should prevent her.

‘Very good, my dear friend,’ said Emma, ‘so you shall; but you must be well enough to eat it first.’

Adelaide smiled faintly, and said no more.

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### CHAPTER III.

Draw my weary heart away  
 From this gloom and strife,  
 And these fever pains allay  
 With the dew of life;  
 Thou canst calm the troubled mind,  
 Thou its dread canst still,  
 Teach me to be all resigned  
 To my Father’s will.—*Lyra Germanica.*

Nobody who has lived long enough in the world to have gained a little experience in its endless varieties of disappointment, will deny that a long-wished-for object very seldom fulfils expectation. It is the trite theme of moralists, and points half the stings of modern satirical fiction. And yet, like many other truths, that appear such a matter of course when applied to our neighbour—as soon as it is applicable to ourselves, it has a wonderful faculty of taking us by surprise. Maurice Randolph would have found it rather difficult to explain, satisfactorily, the state of mind in which he walked back to the rectory from the Manorhouse; but it certainly was not that of serene, self-complacent triumph. He had done a liberal and handsome thing, as the grateful expressions of Mr. Lyndon bore testimony; he had baffled a vulgar and grasping adversary, and saved a respectable name from difficulties, if not from ruin—and at the same time, and by the same means, had gratified one of the most ardent passions of his nature—and yet his heart was heavy within him. The act of heaping coals of fire on the haughty head had not proved so sweet in realization as it had promised to be. With all his imagined sternness of purpose, he found every pulse in his body thrilling with her poignant distress; and he could not conceal from himself, that he would gladly give all he possessed in the world, to be allowed to heal the wound he

had helped to lacerate, and see her comforted and at rest. The conversation of his old friend that evening about the school and lectures that were to be—the chatter of Sophy, not to be styled by a more dignified name, touching all that had transpired in the village during his absence—for the first time irritated and oppressed him; he was glad when Dr. Home announced, with an apology, that he was going to sit up an hour or two later, to finish a refractory sermon; giving him an excuse to stroll out with his cigar, and watch for the light in Adelaide Lyndon's window.

Disappointment awaited him even here. Lights gleamed as usual in the other chambers, and disappeared one by one; but hers, that usually burned long after the rest, never appeared at all. In vain he told himself it was foolish to be fanciful about nothing—that there might be fifty reasons to account for it; it was all very true, but not the less did the silent gloom strike upon his heart with a presentiment of evil, that made his night, if not one of as much suffering, very nearly as sleepless as her own.

One thing he vowed again and again—that he would implore an interview with her the next day, and at whatever sacrifice of pride, dignity, or resentment, obtain such a reconciliation and amnesty, as might enable him to serve her with all his life and soul, without causing her a regret, or claiming a shadow of reward. Not a tear should she shed, not a burden should she bear, that disinterested devotion and untiring watchfulness could avert or roll away.

The morning came at last, and with it Henry, bringing the news of Lady Adelaide's illness.

Randolph felt as if he had grown ten years older. He dared not pause to think on what he had done; to be actively employed, and that instantly, was his only chance. His horse was at Henry's disposal of course, and he had almost resolved to mount the little pony himself, to accompany him, when Abner observed that Mr. Ousel had, to his certain knowledge, just bought a good trotting hack, fit to ride or drive, which, no doubt, he would be happy to lend—he would run that minute and ask. And so he did, and what message he gave was best known to himself, but he brought the horse back with him, and Randolph asked no questions, and overtook Henry before he had gone far. The lawyer, knowing the country best, acted as guide, and they were not long in reaching Mr. Wylde's house. He was just gone out; they tried another, the further end of Shareham—the same answer. Back they came to Mr. Wylde's, in hopes of tracing him—received information—rode on his tracks, just missing him by five minutes everywhere, and at last pursued him to a large brick building, surrounded by a high garden wall, which Henry explained to be an old-fashioned school, of long standing, much favoured by the daughters of the well-to-do



yeomanry of the county. At the gate stood Mr. Wylde's gig at last. Henry sent in his card, and an urgent message; and while they were waiting, a party of girls and teachers passed in from their walk. One of them, whether pupil or teacher he could not guess, looked sharply up at Randolph, as he drew back his horse. It was Miss Unwin, the young lady he had seen expelled from Lady Delaunay's institution. The surprise was mutual, but seeing he was recognized, he lifted his hat. She coloured, returned a somewhat supercilious bow, and went in with the rest. He had ample time to think it over, if he cared so to do, as there were invalids Mr. Wylde could not leave immediately, and neither the fretting of man nor beast availed them much. A maid-servant at last came out to apologize, and taking an opportunity, while Henry was talking to the surgeon's groom, made a signal of secrecy to Randolph, and slipped a note into his hand. It was written in evident haste.

'SIR,—As Lady Delaunay's friend, you, of course, take *her* view of my case, and may think it your duty to society to set everybody against me; but if you are *generous*, and can feel for a young person, misunderstood by narrow-minded prejudice, simply because she thinks and *reads* for herself (I do not pretend to ignore my *crime*), you will allow me to remain in my present situation, without taking advantage of the unhappy circumstances in which you happen to have seen me placed. I came here as teacher in answer to an advertisement. Were a prejudice once excited against me, it might cost me my home and my bread. All Lady Delaunay's dogmas are not necessarily truth, nor do they necessarily lead to perfection, as she may yet find out. Relying on your honour, I am, your obliged,

'ISABELLA UNWIN.'

'Humph!' thought Maurice, as he slipped this missive into his waistcoat pocket, 'if this young lady is here as a teacher, education in these parts must be in a promising state. What does she suppose I care about her sayings and doings, that she goes so mysteriously to work—after the style of her favourite romancists, I suppose? She may read the *Grand Cyrus* for me, if she will only hurry this poisoning allopathist, whom, if he dawdles here much longer, I will have out by the hair of his head.'

Fortunately for the peace of the rival systems, Mr. Wylde soon after made his appearance, and as they would not hear of his keeping any other appointment, they were speedily on their way to Cannymoor.

Randolph would not trust himself to enter the Manorhouse. He could not rely on sufficient composure to meet either Mr. Lyndon

or the ladies. He waited with the horses till Henry came out to tell him the medical man's opinion. It was much what they had expected; there was a good deal of fever, evidently brought on by nervous excitement, and quiet was indispensable. All Emma had done had been perfectly right, and had, no doubt, hindered the feverish symptoms from gaining ground. There was no cause for alarm, only for care and tenderness, and nothing must be allowed to discompose or excite her in any way.

'So there is my wife installed as head nurse in ordinary; and so long as she can be a comfort to her, there she shall stay. I must be in town before the end of next week, and I hope by that time to be able to leave without anxiety. By the way, I have just had a bland note from Spindler, regretting to hear of her ladyship's indisposition, and announcing his own immediate departure for London, where he appoints the day and place of our meeting, if quite agreeable to myself and Mr. Lyndon. If it will suit you to go with me next week, you would perhaps put up with bachelor fare, and give me your company?'

'Thank you, we will see—if all be well *here* then,' stammered Randolph, as if half aware of what he was saying, or was said to him.

'Why, yes,' observed Henry, coolly; 'if all were not well, I should be apt not to go myself; but I see no cause for frightening oneself because a poor woman has been worried into a fever. I shall only take care it does not happen again—at any rate, in this house—since that shelter is left her, thanks to you.'

Randolph turned hastily away without reply. He could bear anything better at that moment, than to be looked upon as her benefactor. Long after he had got rid of the horses did he wander about near the Manorhouse, wearying himself with the question that would return, and could not be answered—'When should he see her again?'

Alas! it was an idle dream his pride had called up, when he imagined that all he desired was to humble, and then to leave her. He knew now, beyond the possibility of misunderstanding, that all the happiness of which his heart was capable, was bound up in that fragile existence; and if the mere attempt to reckon the days and hours which must pass before he could once more look upon her face, made his stout heart sick with fruitless longing—what would be the reality?

'A sad business this, indeed!' was the greeting he received, as he at last entered the rectory parlour. 'I went up to the Manorhouse to inquire, while you were away, and I am quite grieved to find this has been coming on some time. Miss Lyndon has noticed a change in her ever since the evening of her fainting fit, and that

dear little wife of Henry's reports that she confessed not to have had a night's rest for weeks. Flesh and blood, we all know, will not stand that long, though the one be as fair as Helen, and the other as Norman as Rollo. I observed myself that she was upset by something that night; and then all her suspense and trouble since—ah, I see, poor thing! she has gone on till she dropped. She will do that once too often, I am afraid. How any one can have the heart—Why, Maurice, Maurice, lad! What ails thee? My dear boy, what is it?

For Randolph had flung himself down on the little horsehair sofa, and was sobbing like a child.

That night there was no secret between them.

For two days Lady Adelaide continued very ill; on the afternoon of the third, she fell into a quiet sleep of some hours duration, and awoke free from pain and fever. From this time, her recovery progressed satisfactorily; the unwonted weakness made her very docile, and she was soon able to creep to the easy-chair, which Henry had gone over to Shareham to procure for her, and let her nurses rule her as they pleased. She asked no questions; she knew the cares and anxieties of the outer world would return only too soon; and her brain and nerves enjoyed their sabbath even at the cost of health and strength. Peace and comfort had come with Emma; the very sound of her light step across the room, and the touch of her neat hands in the various little offices which she rendered so much more pleasantly than any one else, were refreshment to her senses, at a time when their natural delicacy was rendered more acute by weakness. The friendship, begun over the couch of the infant, ripened fast into intimacy by her own. That one topic, in which they had so much in common, soon opened the way to others: when Adelaide was once led to speak of her own lost darling, a wide breach had been made in her defences; and having tasted the sweetness of sympathy, she was surprised to find herself, by degrees, opening her heart to her newly-made friend, as it would have taken her years to do with any one else. The more Emma saw of her generous and highly-toned nature, mistaken as its impulses often were—and was able to compare what she knew of her former life, with what she saw of her present—the warmer grew her tenderness and good-will, and the keener her regret that she should be so often misunderstood and unappreciated. Still, she could not help thinking it was partly her own fault; and what she thought, she could not help showing. Whenever she saw any of her neighbours, their inquiries after 'her ladyship' were so assiduous, there was nothing they were not all ready to do, or to procure, if possible, that might add to her

comfort, or beguile her convalescence; and granting that their notions of comfort and recreation were slightly comical, and that their tongues were apt to run, 'not wisely, but too well,' still, neighbours they were, and kind-hearted, and among them Lady Adelaide's lot was cast, and therefore towards them she had a duty to perform, and there was no peace of mind to be looked for while duty was left undone.

Without saying this in so many words, it soon forced itself upon Adelaide's understanding, and gave her ample subject-matter for meditation, but not for anger; partly, from the simplicity and unconsciousness of her monitress, and partly, because a stronger, yet gentler voice had already whispered the same within. It was not very agreeable to contemplate. She could not conceal from herself that it was one thing to explain and enforce upon her boy, as she so often did, the golden rules of the 'duty towards my neighbour—' and another to practise them in her intercourse with the Cannymoor world. Many as had been the shortcomings and mistakes to which her eyes had opened of late, this seemed the most unwelcome discovery of all. And when there came one day a note from Miss Sweetman, with a small vase of very stiff wax flowers, of her own making, copied from a Berlin wool pattern, which she hoped her ladyship would allow to stand on her table, in humble anticipation of the beauties of summer—and another time a message from old Mrs. Grayling, and a pile of novels, for the solace of her lonely hours, with markers in popular passages, and a hope that her ladyship would favour them by marking in turn any part she most approved—and one sent her a knitted comforter of all the colours in the rainbow, and another a bottle of perfume of extra potency, and everybody rang at the bell every day to inquire how she was—a sense of ingratitude and ill-desert began to creep over her, and its effect was sooner visible than she was aware. Penelope was at first not quite easy about the alteration in her sister-in-law. People were always so mighty good and amiable when they were going to die; and much as she had been plagued by her tantrums, she would rather put up with them all her life, than lose the poor dear thing. But once reassured on that point, she trod on air. In taking her share of nursing and attendance, she spared neither time nor trouble; and scrupulously avoided all unpleasant topics, or anything that might bring on exciting conversation; but as a little compensation for this restraint, she kept up a despotism in the sick room, that contrasted strongly with Emma's mild, constitutional government. The fact was, there was something so delicious in having the contumacious Adelaide helplessly at her mercy, it was not in human nature to withstand the temptation of making the most of an authority that might be so brief; laws were

enacted, and measures enforced for the mere pleasure of enjoying her unresisting obedience ; and in one way and another, she sauced Lady Adelaide's broths, so to speak, with the stimulating chalybeate of the rod of iron.

The unanswerable excuse of 'putting things tidy' afforded a charming opportunity for a great deal more ransacking and rearranging of the room than the owner at all liked, or would have suffered, had she been strong enough to prevent it. Her worldly goods were, indeed, a curious medley, and she apologized for it to Emma, who, observing the military neatness with which everything was stowed away, could not help thinking that the reformers, as is not unfrequently the case, were doing as much harm as good. A few bottles of acids for Walter's experiments—a small collection of dried plants, birds' eggs, stones, and skeleton flowers, all claiming the same proprietor—well-worn classical and rudimental books, studied at night for his instruction by day—her own small library, enlarged by loans from the rectory, old-fashioned, but full of pregnant matter—her scanty wardrobe, faultless in its ladylike arrangement—her unfinished pile of needlework for her boy, which her feeble fingers were yearning to complete—her husband's travelling desk, which she always used, and his sword, which she suffered no hand to brighten but her own—formed the principal articles in the inventory, and presented little to gratify the curious. Gratified, however, they were with the mere privilege of looking them well over ; and the first thing Penelope did, was to 'make,' as she said, 'a clearance of all the horrid, dangerous stuff, that might poison the whole house ;' luring Mr. Wylde into pronouncing them unsafe, and then coaxing his groom to carry them off in his gig. All the dry books went next, as it was enough to give any one the headache to look at them ; and what might have followed, it were hard to say, had not Lady Adelaide, of two evils choosing the least, in real desperation accepted the offer of being read to, and thus purchased peace for her chattels, while securing edification for her mind. In this good work, Miss Lucy was only too pleased to join ; and between them and Mrs. Grayling, they contrived to pour into her resigned ears such a stream of depressing fiction, as must soon have reduced her spirits to an alarmingly low ebb, if she had not had presence of mind enough sometimes to listen without attending. Indeed, she was detected more than once, dropping quietly off to sleep just at the popular passages ; but as this only happened under Lucy's less vigilant rule, and was always apologized for with contrite politeness, it did not mar the general harmony.

Henry Lyndon, finding all going on so well, prepared to return to London, and arranged to leave his wife and child at Cannymoor

till Easter, when he would complete his own visit, and take them home. In spite of laws and regulations, he made his way into the invalid's room to take leave; engaging to do her no mischief, but the contrary. She was reclining in the chair he had given her, looking pale, and delicate, and very lovely; and the grateful expression in her eyes, as she held out her hands to meet his, spoke volumes of what she felt. He pressed them warmly, and was considering how to introduce business, without risk, when she began it herself, still detaining his hands as if they were anchors of hope.

'Henry, you remember what I told you. You will keep it in mind, will you not?'

'I do—I will. You shall act as you think proper, depend upon it. You have one friend, at least, who has your happiness at heart, and who will watch over your interests to the best of his ability, if you will let him. Will you keep this in mind?'

'Ah, Henry, I owe you too much already to forget.'

'Would you like to rub off the score? I will show you how. There is a small, but snug tenement in London, where there is always room for you—not such as you have a right to expect, but you are too old a soldier to be particular; and here,' drawing Emma towards him, 'is a lady who has been longing to invite you, and has not mustered audacity enough. Give a little encouragement to a young beginner, and when you want a change of home, let us have the preference. We ask it as a favour.'

She looked up at them as they stood together, in the vigour of health and energy—so quietly happy in their mutual affection and confidence; and tried to smile, but her head drooped, and joining Emma's hand to her husband's, before they could prevent her, she bent over them, and pressed her lips on both.

'Do not be afraid,' she said, as she relinquished her hold, and leaned quietly back on her pillows, smiling faintly at Henry's look of dismay; 'I am not going to alarm you, Henry, as I did the other day; you have done me good, for I feel, let what will happen to me, my boy has friends in you both. And he will need them; for his father's sake, Henry—he is in some things so like him—for his sake I know you will——'

'For his father's sake, for his mother's, and for his own,' said Henry; 'and, as you say, he will need friends, for so promising a young firebrand I never saw. The very personification of philosophy in sport made mischief in earnest. Surely it is not true that you allowed him to scare the maids by scrawling with phosphorus?'

'He only did it once,' pleaded the mother, 'and some story put it into his head.'

‘No, don’t apologize ; it is only in accordance with the modern system of scientific education. I am glad it was not on my new paint, that is all. When your grand new school-house and lecture-room are finished, you will have plenty of that sort of thing, no doubt. Walter is crazy to convince the cads that ice can be made by an air-pump. I tell you what, if his uncle once got hold of that boy, he would never let you have him again—I saw how taken he was by my description. Ah, you shake your head despondingly : I don’t.’

Emma touched his arm, not quite satisfied with the flush that was creeping over her patient’s cheeks.

‘Well,’ he said, taking the hint, ‘I must go, trusting to find you strong and independent on my return. Do you remember my warning about your cousin, Miss Conway?’

‘Yes ; and though I cannot quite think as you do, I will act as if I did.’

‘Then I have only to add another respecting a certain individual, possessing the same dangerous qualities as that lady, without the advantages of birth and breeding—Mr. Abel Spindler. I sincerely trust that you will not be troubled with him again ; but as he seems to have impudence enough for anything, if you *should*, let no persuasions, no attempts to work upon your fears, or your self-devotion, induce you to have any dealings with him whatsoever. Refer him to me as your legal adviser ; say you have put everything into my hands, and leave me to manage him. What else are lawyers for?’

‘And pray what are nurses for?’ interrupted Penelope, coming briskly in, with a couple of volumes under her arm, and seating herself by Adelaide’s chair, ‘if they allow law to be discussed in the patient’s room? As if it was not enough to make the healthy and able-bodied sick—let alone the convalescent ! Your wife may allow it, Harry, but I don’t ; so take your leave, and then right about face—quick march, and be off. Emma may go down and see the last of you, for I am going to read to Adelaide. Good-bye!’

So peremptorily was he turned out, his client had only time, by a gentle pressure of his hand, to acknowledge his advice ; over which she had leisure to ponder afterwards during the reading of seven mortal chapters of what Miss Sweetman had especially recommended for Lady Adelaide Lyndon, as giving a finished portrait of fashionable life in the highest circles—*Rotten Row, or the Star of the Season*. Whereof the biographer has only been able to collect, that it contained, like the Emperor’s famous army,

Marshals by the dozen, and dukes by the score,  
Princes a few, and kings one or two.

## CHAPTER XX.

And her great heart, through all the faultful past,  
Went sorrowing. *Pennyson.*

MISS LYNDON'S exertions for her sister-in-law's intellectual and moral development were not confined to one branch of literature. On the second Sunday after Adelaide's attack, when she was beginning to grow rebellious against restrictions and rules, and to talk with increasing temerity of soon being about as usual, Lucy came into her room to announce that Penny was going to the afternoon service with her father, Emma would take the baby into the drawing-room to amuse mamma, while the little nurse went to church; and Penny had sent Adelaide something which she was sure would do her good. With this, she produced a small, square manuscript, of that peculiar shape and appearance that is like nothing but a sermon; and no less a sermon it proved to be than that preached by Dr. Home in the morning.

'Penelope was so impressed by it, she followed him into the vestry, and teased him till he lent it to her, though he said it was against his rules. But as Penny says, she should never forgive herself if she let you miss such an advantage.'

'She is very kind,' said Lady Adelaide, holding out her hand for the manuscript.

'Oh, my dear, you are not to sit trying your eyes over the dear old doctor's scrawly writing; I promised faithfully I would read it to you, and if you don't like me to do it, Penny will stay at home and come instead.'

This settled the matter, and Adelaide submitted; with the consolatory reflection, that even through the medium of Lucy's delivery, her old pastor's discourse would be an improvement on *Rotten Row*.

The monotonous intonation where the writing and meaning were clear, the puzzled hesitations where they grew obscure, the lively flights of imaginative fancy where they were unintelligible, certainly contrived to make the second reading a wonderful contrast to the first; nevertheless, the listener's attention became fixed from the beginning, and never flagged to the end.

The text was one she remembered too well — 'God resisteth the proud;' and *pride*, as the opening announced, formed the subject; the second division of the verse being reserved for the afternoon. Prolific enough, in good sooth, appeared the first; and the manner



in which it was handled was long remembered in Cannymoor. It was always remarked that he was severer in Lent than at other seasons, and this time he seemed to have put on his terrors more sternly than usual. He held up the sin in every possible light, hunted it into every corner, exposed it under every disguise, traced it in every disposition. There was the pride of birth, and the pride of low extraction—the pride of wealth, and the pride of poverty—and the pride of pretence, which belonged to all four; there was the pride of reserve, and the pride of indiscretion—the pride of revenge, and the pride of forgiveness—the pride of impenitence, and the pride of reform—the pride of egotism, and the pride of generosity—the pride of self-worship, and the pride of self-mortification—the pride of knowledge, and the pride of ignorance—the pride of unbelief, and the pride of religious profession. For all these, and more, he had a lash, and a stinging one; there was nobody in the church that did not wince, more or less, either for themselves or for their neighbours. The paragraph, however, that had charmed Miss Lyndon most, and which she had charged her deputy to deliver with most emphasis, was a quotation, with which the sermon concluded—the last words coming out with a blow on the closed page, as if it were a *coup-de-grâce* upon the enemy.

‘How much it delighteth them when they are able to appal with the cloudiness of their look; how far they exceed the terms wherewith man’s nature should be limited; how they bear their heads above others—how they browbeat all men, which do not receive their sentences as oracles, with marvellous applause and approbation; how they look upon no man but with an indirect countenance, nor hear anything, save their own praises, with patience, nor speak without scornfulness and disdain! How they use their servants as if they were beasts—their inferiors as servants—their equals as inferiors—and as for superiors, acknowledge *none*; how they admire themselves as venerable, puissant, wise, circumspect, provident, every way great; taking all men besides themselves for ciphers—poor, inglorious, silly creatures—needless burdens of the earth—offscourings—nothing!’

‘Give me the hearts of all men, *humbled*, and what is there that can overthrow or disturb the peace of the world? Where many things are cause of much evil but PRIDE, of ALL!’

‘Where is that taken from?’ asked Adelaide, quickly.

‘I don’t know, dear, exactly; but there is a name marked opposite, Horner—Hawker—which is it? I know Hawker’s *Morning Portion*, and the Life of Dr. Johnson—oh no, that is Hawkins. It is from Hawker’s *Morning Portion*, dear, you may depend.’

'Let me see,' said Lady Adelaide, doubtfully.

Lucy was reluctant to trust it out of her own keeping, but the invalid was growing too many for her, single-handed; and under protest, she gave it up.

'Hooker—I thought so,' said Adelaide.

'Did you really? Well, to be sure! and so it is Hooker! What have I read about him somewhere? He was a Pilgrim Father, wasn't he?—or something of that sort—and brought home potatoes and tobacco? I cannot think how such a good pious man could make such a mistake as to introduce anything so odious as smoking. There now, my dear, as you are not to tire yourself, I must take this away.'

But to this Lady Adelaide would not consent, and knowing Penelope to be safely out of reach, she stood on her rights, and would not be convinced that to look it over at her leisure would infallibly bring back a return of feverish headache. And when the old rector, who called in the evening to see her, was admitted by Emma into her room, he found it opened by her side, with more than one suspicious blister on the relentless pages. Of this he took no notice at first, being more intent on observing her altered, though improving looks, and the delicacy of the thin white hand, which he held on his own sturdy palm, as if afraid he should break it. She smiled at his wistful expression, and assured him the hand was stronger than he thought, and meant to do a good deal of work yet, before it had done.

'Well, my dear friend, so long as it is the work appointed you, I say nothing against that. Work does everybody good, and I dare say you have found some to do, even up here, with this kind little Christian soul pottering about you, in the way ladies understand so much better than anybody else. Do you know, I could almost fancy being ill myself, to be so petted; but I never yet took kindly to a flannel nightcap and a big basin of gruel, which is all the comfort I get from Colly and Sophy. Well, so you are reading my scolding for the million—eh?'

'Is it for the million, sir? It seemed to me meant only for *one*.'

'Come, I am glad you felt that; if everybody thinks the same, I am satisfied. But, my dear, you may make your mind quite easy on one thing, that whenever I preach a sermon entirely upon *you*, I shall take care it is when you are there to hear it.'

'I might have known that, certainly,' said she, with a smile; 'you never yet scrupled to tell me the truth.'

'Yes, I have, over and over again. If I had had courage enough to speak my mind to you a year ago or more, I should have done my duty much better than I have; but I was afraid of hurting your feelings, and that I might do more harm than good. Otherwise I

often longed to come and take you by the arm, my dear friend, and say, "When there is so much work to be done, why standest thou here all the day idle?"

'What work *could* I have done here?' asked she, colouring.

'Would you have been sent here, do you think, if there had not been some waiting for you? You came among us, our superior in every natural advantage; and the very circumstances of trial and affliction, under which you were placed, only made all hearts more ready to bid you welcome. You might have won, and then have improved every one with whom you came in contact; all that was necessary was, that you should *love* them. Granted that you found plenty to annoy your taste, plenty of old-fashioned, and not a few silly ways; ignorance of real life, want of education, and I may add, want of good sense and tongue government. Well, you knew better, and it was for you to make the better ways so attractive that they would be glad to follow your lead. It would have cost you very little trouble; it is as natural to you to be fascinating, as it is to some people to be the reverse.'

The blunt compliment came out so oddly, that Mrs. Henry Lyndon, who had grown slightly uncomfortable during this speech, could not restrain a smile; but it was lost upon Lady Adelaide, whose attitude plainly showed the pain she felt at a charge, which her conscience would not allow her to refute, nor her respect for the speaker to resent. She made no reply, though he paused for one.

'Well,' said he, at last, after a quiet observation of her half-averted face and raised colour, 'what has been the result of your acting otherwise? Why, that there are not half-a-dozen persons in the parish who know you as you are; how should they? And so some one who has taken up a wrong notion repeats it, and the less true a thing is, the readier people are to believe it, and to tell it again, and embellish it, perhaps, with a few touches of their own; till, by the time it has gone the round, and some good-natured friend tells it you, you hardly know yourself, nor could anybody else. If I had no better means of knowing you than by common report, I should not venture to sit here, telling you disagreeable things; for it requires,' added he, holding out his hand with his usual hearty kindness, and more than usual respect of manner, 'no small amount of humility to bear plain speaking, and no less magnanimity to forgive it.'

She could not but return the frank pressure. 'Ah, sir,' she said, trying to smile as she looked up; 'do not be too sure; it is as much as I can do.'

'Only tell me, then, am I right in what I have said?'

'I wish I could deny it. We see the truth sometimes too late.'

'Too late? what do you mean by that? I trust there will be many years for you to profit by my advice, long after I cease to give it. *Too late* is an under turnkey of Giant Despair, and I detest the very rattle of his bolts and bars. No, no; if trouble has taught you a difficult lesson, it has not been merely to torment you in your weakness, but to show you what to do with your strength. You say you are ready to work—let patience finish hers, and rest and comfort will come in time. This is the very injunction I have had to lay on your poor friend, Mrs. Smith.'

The conversation, as he had intended, turned after this upon the sick woman and her child, and the rector was just telling her of the probability that the mother would be discovered, when he was interrupted by a vehement petition from Walter. He had been kept out of the room much more than he at all approved, and there was something very particular he had to say that he really could not put off any longer. He would not stay five minutes, but might he come in?

The moment permission was given, he made one bound on to his mother's knee—nestling his rough curly head on her shoulder, and almost overpowering her with his caresses and his weight.

'It is so *jolly dull* without you downstairs, mamma! and on Sundays worst of all; for nobody has got anything to do, and so they sit and growl at each other, and me—no, I didn't mean to be rude, I won't again—but I do want you to be well; it is so stupid saying my lessons to Aunt Lucy; she does not know anything I ask her, and she always forgets which is latitude and which is longitude—fancy, mamma! Oh, and I must tell you, I was reading Queen Elizabeth to her yesterday, and just for fun I jumped on to Anne, and she never found it out, only all of a sudden Aunt Penny looked up so sharp when I came to the Duke of Marlborough, I was obliged to hop back again to Sir Walter Raleigh. But I say, mamma,' once more stopping the remonstrance he saw on her lips; 'I was going to ask you, do you happen to want to know exactly what o'clock it is, to a second?'

It had not occurred to her, but she would, if he wished it.

'Because if you do, look *here*!' And he pulled out a small gold hunting-watch, with a short chain and handsome seal, which Dr. Home, for one, recognized directly.

'Is not that a beauty, mamma? just what a gentleman ought to wear?'

'It is, indeed,' said Lady Adelaide, shaking her head with a smile and a blush at Emma; 'and a great deal too good for some gentleman I could name. Cousin Henry spoils us both.'

'No, he doesn't at all. He had nothing to do with it; had he, cousin Emma?'

‘Then how is it,’ his mother said, gravely, ‘that you have broken my rule, never to accept a present without my leave?’

‘I have not; it is no present—only a fair exchange. You know the little old watch you gave me, with the chain of your hair; it never went right, and you said it was quite worn out. Well, he took such a fancy to it, just as he was going away, nothing would satisfy him but we must change; it was exactly the size he liked; he had a great taste for old trinkets; and he could get it mended as good as new, or better, if I would let him have it, chain and all. I told him it must be *very* old; for it was yours when you were quite little; but he did not mind that. I knew it didn’t matter about your hair, because you have such heaps—enough for me to make chains of all my life, you know, mamma; and it is so much more gentlemanly to have a short one hanging down; and the seal is a real antique, he said. I don’t exactly know what that means, but—’

‘Stop, Walter, I do not understand; do you mean that cousin Henry was in earnest?’

‘Cousin Henry had nothing to do with it, I tell you. It was Mr. Randolph.’

The watch dropped from Lady Adelaide’s hand; the rector caught it just in time.

‘I thought I knew it again,’ said he; ‘but you were mighty close about it, youngster. When did he give it you?’

‘When I wished him good-bye at the rectory door; and he lifted me up in his arms to put the chain round his neck, and said he should never wear any other. I didn’t want to be taken up like a great baby, but he is so strong, he nearly took all my breath away with the hug he gave me, and said he should never forget the kindness I had done him, and hoped we should be friends for life. So I said I hoped so too; I could do no less, could I, mamma?’

‘Perhaps not,’ she said, as if the words choked her.

‘Then, as it is no longer a secret, may I run and show it to grandpapa? I long for him to see it—it is so much better than his!’

The amiability of this reason was, to say the least of it, questionable, but it passed unnoticed. Silence was taken for assent, and away he flew, happily unconscious of the vexation he had caused his mother. As soon as the door closed upon him, she turned to the rector with a voice tremulous with impatience.

‘I do beg of you, sir, as a personal favour, to make your friend Mr. Randolph understand once for all, that these polite attempts to confer obligations upon me give me so much pain, he must see the propriety of discontinuing them. Others may gratefully avail themselves of his liberal assistance; but to that I am no party, nor my

son. I owe too much already to my friends to suppose we can go through the world without their help ; but from those who are not and never can be, it ceases to be a service—and when forced against our express desire, partakes of the nature of insult.’

‘I perfectly agree with you, my dear ; but if it is not too great a liberty, may I ask why Maurice Randolph can never hope to be your friend ?’

‘*That, sir, you must ask him.*’

‘Well, you see, I *have*.’

Lady Adelaide looked at him fixedly, too startled to articulate the question he read in her eyes.

‘Just as you have already conjectured, my dear, he told me everything.’

‘He *did* ?’ she repeated slowly, and in a low, hollow voice—  
‘he *did* ?’

‘Yes ; he was so cut up about your illness, that he could not help pouring out his full heart to his old friend—and yours. And I promised him, in return, that as soon as you were able to listen, I would ask you to forgive him.’

‘Forgive him—for what ?’ asked she, in the same tone, as if speaking in a dream.

Dr. Home looked at Emma : who after a little hesitation, quietly rose, and took her seat on Adelaide’s footstool, laying her hand on hers. The touch seemed to rouse her recollection ; for she gave a start, and a convulsive shiver, and raised herself in her chair.

‘Nay,’ said Emma, tenderly, ‘you have only warm friends by you, who would not hurt your feelings for the world ; it is nothing to be ashamed of—only it would not be honest to keep from you any longer that he has confided in Henry and me, as well as in Dr. Home ; and however much he may be to blame, we cannot help feeling he is to be pitied too.’

Lady Adelaide looked at her in trouble and amazement. ‘Stay !’ she said, putting her hands for a moment before her eyes ; ‘let me think—let me recollect myself ! You bewilder me—I shall begin soon to doubt my own identity, or whether I am not in a fever dream. Why did he grieve over my illness, and why is he to be pitied, who has the world before him, with health, independence, and liberty ? Why wake up the dead past, that cannot be too thoroughly forgotten ? Why single out that unhappy period of bitterness, and drag into light before others the mistakes we make so easily and so recklessly in youth, and bear the consequences so heavily in after years ? Tell him this from me, Dr. Home—tell him, Emma, when you see him again—that all he can do for me now, if old associations have any force to overcome prejudice, is to meet me and think of me as a stranger ; and let those old days

be as if they had never been. Would to Heaven they never had !'

She paused with a heavy sigh ; her friends watched her in silence, not knowing how to answer without the risk of increasing her agitation. It was too late to regret the introduction of the subject ; the kindest thing, now the mischief was done, seemed to be to encourage her to speak freely ; but it was some little time before she did—she sat with her eyes fixed on the fire, as earnestly as if reading in the embers those pages of bygone life she so vainly would have blotted out.

When she spoke again, however, it was with the composure of a settled resolution, and her voice had resumed its naturally gentle tone.

'I did not think,' she said, 'that I should ever allude to those times again to any living being. But small as may be the amount of your esteem which I possess, I cannot afford to lose it ; and having already heard so much, it is necessary you should hear more. You shall know all, and then judge for yourselves, whether it is unjustifiable pride on my part that makes me shrink from being beholden to Mr. Randolph.'

'His face, his image, his name—not the image, not the name by which we know him now, for the one is not more changed than the other—are linked in my memory with some of my happiest days. When I knew him first, I was hardly more than a child, and he was already a man, and a superior one ; as far above me, in my estimation, as if he had been a Newton or a Davy. I was sent to General Conway's house after the death of a dear and amiable governess, who had lived with me since I was eight years old ; and as my mother at that time was too much occupied with the immense amount of business, political and otherwise, that devolved upon her in her position, to be able to devote much attention to me, I became by degrees a constant visitor at my uncle's for months at a time, and the finishing of my education gradually fell into the hands of his favourite secretary. This, I conclude, he has told you already. How far it was wise or right, I dare not now attempt to judge : I had no voice in it, and after awhile, was happier there than anywhere else.'

'I had had many instructors of one kind and another, in the different accomplishments acquired by girls of my age ; but since my first recollections of my mother's teaching, in itself unlike anything I ever met with afterwards, I had never known what it was to be under the influence of a really superior mind. His richly stored understanding developed mine, I knew not how : he seemed at once to communicate knowledge and to create the faculty of receiving it, and the craving for more. I had learned from others by routine—he roused my reasoning powers, and my

ambition to excel ; directed my taste, tempered my judgment, and without any forcing or unhealthy stimulus, led me to find my highest gratification in intellectual pursuits. You must excuse this egotism ; it is necessary for the explanation of what followed. Indeed, it seems so long ago to look back upon, that I feel as if I were telling, not my own history, but that of some one dead—of whom I would have you judge, not so much by what she was, as by what she might have been !

‘Whatever he may have said or thought of *me*, let me render this testimony to *him*—he never wilfully betrayed his trust, or attempted to make an unworthy use of his influence. His behaviour to me was marked with a respect and deference that served, it may be, unawares, to nourish and strengthen that besetting sin, of which,’ laying her hand on the rector’s, ‘I have been warned so faithfully. Admiring his abilities, as I did, with all the enthusiasm of sixteen, his homage and friendship appeared a personal distinction, raising me in my own eyes, and in those of others. For we had gradually grown from master and pupil to the affection and confidence of friends ; and as friends we rode and walked, and studied together, and passed such happy hours, as I should hardly dare to recal, were it not, as I told you before, that it sounds to me now like a story of the dead.

‘There was no one to warn me, or even to see my danger. When I was at home, I saw but little of my mother, who, satisfied to find me improving, had no time to inquire more. I had not been accustomed to confide in her, often as I longed for the privilege ; and so my romantic friendship with Mr. Gray, though it was the subject of all my day-dreams, and I was often yearning to be assured of her sympathy and approval, was never known to her at all.

‘The rude awakening came last. First, my cousin, Miss Conway, who had all along been a sharer in my studies, as well as in my intimacy, and had, indeed, enjoyed his friendship longer than I had, began to show signs of dissatisfaction and irritability when she saw us together, for which I could not account. I comprehended afterwards, that her better knowledge of the world made her foresee the difficulties of our peculiar position ; but with the wilfulness of young ignorance, I thought it was only caprice, and laughed at it accordingly. My visions were then of a brilliant future, devoted to literature and science, and the patronage of struggling genius, with Maurice Gray raised to eminence by my aid—drawing inspiration from my influence, and giving me strength and support by his. But as time went on, and I was nearly seventeen, a change came over him still more perplexing than my cousin’s. He seemed to avoid my company—to try not to speak to



me—to study coldness of manner—and the more I endeavoured to win back his former kindness, the stranger his behaviour grew. Till at last it was all explained ; one day in June——’

She paused, and looked inquiringly, half fearfully, at her companions.

‘Go on,’ said Dr. Home, gently ; ‘we know to what you allude ; but we have only heard one side. Let me just say this first—that considering the force of the temptation, I do not see how the poor lad could have acted better, than to sacrifice everything for his own honour and your peace.’

‘I admit it all,’ she said ; ‘I have long done so : but I could not *then*. Conceive, if you can, an inexperienced, impetuous girl, whose very ignorance made her terror the greater, being told the encouragement she had given him had become so marked, and the attachment she had shown so unmistakeable, that being as unable from inclination, as he was prohibited by honour, from availing himself of her weakness, he had no alternative but to resign his situation. Conceive this said to me, by my own cousin, who had heard it from himself, and who added her own terrible testimony, that she had seen it already, and tried to prevent it, in vain. I dare not attempt to describe the effect of her words. To me it seemed nothing short of indelible disgrace. What I had said or done to give rise to such a charge, I could not tell : I only knew it had never occurred to me for a moment, and *he*, at least, ought to have known me better. And when, in the very height of my agony of mind, he himself appeared before me, and my cousin, with a sarcastic remark, left us together, I can just remember, that between shame, indignation, and grief, I spoke passionately—bitterly—as to an enemy who had insulted my whole race in my person ; I forget the words I used ; I only felt that I hated him, and was resolved he should see it. What he said, I could not, would not heed, till I suddenly found he was protesting his devotion to *me*—to *me*, whom he had held up to my own scorn, as well as his ! I broke from him with a word of contemptuous defiance, which he has never yet forgiven—and never will.

‘He left us that day, and for many years I saw him no more. But the injury he had done me was irreparable. My cousin, whose kindness at that time was unwearied, assured me no one but herself knew, or ever should know, the cause of his departure. It would kill my mother, she said, to be told the truth ; and she pictured the effect of such a discovery on all my friends so vividly, that I was over-persuaded, and stooped to my first concealment. Oh ! may I be forgiven ! It was that first deviation from openness that prepared the way for the last.

‘From that time I was another being. A distaste for every

pursuit connected with the remembrance of Maurice Gray drove me to find resources in objects I had formerly despised. I believe I had grown rather into the habit of looking down upon others for being fond of dress and amusement; but now I was only anxious to escape from the dreariness within; and as my friends were eager to promote my pleasure, before I was actually out in the world I was allowed to attend some gay parties with my cousin. At one of these it was I first met *him* on whom I brought exile, danger, and death. Your husband, Emma, will tell you what he was. It is only those who knew him who can be indulgent to me; who can understand what, in the condition my mind was in at the time, was the magical influence of that passionate devotion, pleading in every feature, glowing in every word and look—of love, and courage, and ardour, breathing from a face that no one could ever resist—so bright, so eager, so affectionate—'

Her voice failed her; she could not go on. Dr. Home's eyes filled, as he stroked her hand in token of sympathy.

'Poor thing, poor thing!' he repeated, several times. 'I always thought you were more to be pitied than blamed.'

'Perhaps so,' said she, struggling to recover her voice; 'but there is room enough for blame, pity me as you will. Had I been in a healthier frame of mind—had I not already suffered the loss of self-esteem—had I not yielded to the temptation of concealment from my best friend—I might have been saved from my last act of imprudence. But I seemed at that time to be hurried along, I knew not how, by passions and influences against which I had no defence; the only one that could have protected, I had not then learned to seek. Then came my mother's grave, disapproving looks—her serious remonstrances—her stern command to see him no more; and but for my cousin, I should not have dared to disobey. But she was warmly interested in our cause—she pitied, consoled, encouraged us both; she saw Walter privately, and urged him to persevere, and me to be patient; and was, from first to last, our sympathizing friend. It was from her I learnt why his regiment was ordered to India; and through her instrumentality we had that interview which decided my fate. It was she, too, who encouraged me to believe that my mother's sense of the family dignity and honour would induce her, when the deed was done, to pardon and receive us. All her best offices were promised on our behalf, and by her active help, the arrangements for the secret marriage were finally made.

'Here, before you both, as I have often before God, I own my sin, for it was great. And step by step, with the transgression came the punishment it deserved. The hourly humiliation of the deceit I found myself compelled to practise—the terror of the

morning flight—the dread of pursuit and capture—the shame of hearing Henry’s brave remonstrance, his first kindness to me, who owe him so much—all were misery enough in themselves; but nothing to equal that moment after the ceremony, when I saw my mother’s face, and read my sentence—never since repealed!

‘I have little more to tell you. My life in India was only what other officers’ wives had to encounter, and I had many merciful deliverances. Sorrow, heavy, bitter sorrow, darkened my path—but so it did to others, who deserved it less. Nothing has prospered with me, nothing will, till that silent curse is removed; but I have always met with friends, and might, perhaps, have had more, had I learned Dr. Home’s lesson a little earlier. During all those years, I never heard of Mr. Gray, and when he was introduced to me a few weeks ago in this house, by another name, he was so much altered, I did not recollect him for some time. When I did, my first sensation was that of pleasure, and my first impulse to greet him warmly: but the bitter look he gave reminded me of that with which we parted, and told me my words were neither forgotten nor forgiven. In the short conversation that we had that evening, he was harsh, almost cruel; and the depth to which by my conduct I had sunk in his esteem, struck me so painfully, that, as the rector knows, I disturbed the peace of the whole party, by one of those attacks of faintness to which I have been, of late years, rather subject. I could not tell you all, sir, *then*; but your kindness I shall never forget; no, nor the words you said, nor the agony of the night that followed.’

The agony did not seem to have quite passed away, judging by the quivering lips with which she recalled it; and for a few minutes she leaned back, with closed eyes, in silence. Rousing herself, however, by an effort, while her companions were hesitating what to do, she turned to the rector. ‘Tell me, sir, now you have heard so much, is it strange that your friend should not be mine?’

Dr. Home scarcely required Emma’s warning glance to put him on his guard against causing renewed agitation. Enough had been risked already, and he was only anxious to close the subject and leave her to repose.

‘Without entirely agreeing with you, as to the impossibility of such a thing, I may say this for your comfort—that according to your means of judging, it is quite natural you should feel as you do. If Maurice had begun by sneering at my church and parish, because he might have seen better, it would have gone uncommonly against the grain with me to accept his new school-house. You have a right to expect he should clear himself of contempt; and I have a right to ask you to suspend judgment, till *you*, in turn, have

heard the other side. You are exhausted now, with talking, and I shall leave you ; we can renew the subject another time when you have recovered your strength. Your confidence is not misplaced, and I thank you for it ; and still more for the manner in which you have borne my plain speaking. Rest now, and be assured that to those who can simply *trust*, all things work together for good—even their own mistakes and errors. I shall send you the second part of my sermon,’ he added, in a low voice, as he shook hands with more than his usual kindness, ‘for you have so thoroughly mastered the first, it is only fair you should be reminded, as you have reminded *me*—that He who “resisteth the proud,” also “giveth grace to the humble.”’

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## CHAPTER XXI.

But, O !—

What shall I say to *thee*, Lord Scroop—?—*Shakespeare*.

‘My dear Mrs. Marsden, I am come up to persuade you to venture out for a drive ; my aunt is waiting for you in the carriage. Now, do be bold and venturesome for once, and never mind the doctors ; the air is so mild, the trees in the Park are all in full bud, and you will be well much sooner than if you stay shut up like this.’

It was never very difficult to argue Mrs. Marsden into any measure that did not give her too much trouble, so long as you took care to have the last word ; and Miss Conway knew this pretty well by experience. The prudential admonitions of medical advisers would have kept her in without much remonstrance till midsummer ; but she had no power of resistance against urgent persuasion to venture out in Lent. So after piling on a sufficient quantity of wraps to defy even the vicissitudes of a British spring, she allowed herself to be installed by Lady Delaunay’s side—whose active, delicate form contrasted as strongly with the good-tempered, indolent heaviness of her companion, as did Miss Conway’s sharply defined features, and keenly anxious expression, with the fresh round cheeks, and glances, half shy, half saucy, of Lilla Brittan, when they were left alone. Miss Conway’s impatience would not suffer her to wait for voluntary information. She examined all the doors to insure security against listeners, and then began eagerly.

‘Well, my dear, what have you heard ? I have been despairing of ever finding you alone. Now we are safe for a couple of hours at least. Tell me, have you seen or heard anything lately of Mr. Randolph ?’

‘He called after he came back from the country ; and said he

was in town on business, but meant soon to go into ——shire for a few days. I have not seen him since.'

'Have you heard anything more about those papers?'

'Well, I am pretty sure he brought them back with him. I was sent out of the room, but I only went into the next, you know, and that inner door is not always shut.'

'You are a clever little creature, I know *that*. And what did you happen to overhear, by chance?'

'By chance, as you say, I just caught part of the conversation—that trumpet is a charming invention, to be sure. He said it was very disagreeable to him to have such an office, and nothing but respect for somebody's last wishes would have induced him to accept it; but he should be very glad if the proper person were at hand to see justice done—or something of that sort. You know one cannot catch all the words, and I am sure one cannot remember them.'

'Certainly not; you are very ingenious to manage as you do. Was anything said about any missing papers?'

'Yes; he seemed very sorry, and it was their loss that had delayed his bringing back the others; but he still hoped they would be recovered. Meanwhile, it was for her to decide what she wished done. She took it all very easily, as she does most things; and it ended, I imagine, in nothing being done just at present; they are to wait for somebody—I don't know who.'

'Was anything said to give you an idea to what the papers referred to?'

Lilla hesitated; the question was repeated in a more imperative tone.

'Well, he said something about treachery and deceit; he did not mention names—exactly.'

'You are quite sure of that?' said Miss Conway, looking steadily in her face.

'Quite sure; or if he did, what is it to me? I have nothing to do with all these secrets, and what is more, I hate them. I was in such a fright all the time that somebody would come in, and catch me listening. If Lady Delaunay knew, she would never trust me again.'

'Probably not, so I trust she never may. So long as I am your friend, my dear, you need not be uneasy on that score. Do you happen to know where the writing-case is, in which those papers were kept?'

'Not very far off. Just behind the big Bible there.'

'And where is the key?'

Miss Brittan knew it hung on a ring with several others, as she had often had to hunt for them, as well as for Mrs. Marsden's

spectacles, thimble, and any other stray article that she happened to have laid down for a minute ; but where they were at that time, was more than the most sagacious mind could take upon itself to divine in a hurry. She, for one, didn't know, and didn't care. Spurred on, however, by her imperious companion, she searched in every available corner, and found them at the bottom of a basket of Berlin wool, which the old lady had been turning over that morning.

'We had better take off the one we want, and put back the others, in case of accident,' said Miss Conway.

'Don't say *we* want it, for I don't at all. And suppose it is missed before we can put it back ?'

'That is unlikely ; I know where my aunt is gone, and they are safe for an hour longer, at least,' argued Miss Conway, as having slipped off the key, she proceeded to open the desk. As she expected, two packets were there, but Randolph had carefully sealed them up, when he returned them, and there is sufficient conventional sacredness about a seal to make a conscience hesitate, that would think nothing of turning a key, or untying a string. She sat with them in her hand a few minutes, pondering what was to be done ; but the reflection that if there *were* any of her own letters there, she had at least as good a right as anybody to see them, decided the question ; and desiring Lilla to guard the door, she lighted a taper, melted the wax of the envelopes with the skill of a practised hand, and was soon absorbed in the contents. Lilla Brittan, to whom the whole of this proceeding appeared as objectionable as perilous, watched her with considerable curiosity, and had ample leisure for revolving the practical lesson just received, during the next three quarters of an hour—for her companion had forgotten her existence.

Oh ! those old letters ! they are trying enough to turn over when written by other people—but what when they are our own ? The hasty words that flew from the pen, as the sparks on the flinty highway beneath the dashing hoof, in prompt revenge of some wrong that now we can hardly recall ;—the fervent yearnings of divided affection, only consoled for absence by that silent, patient medium—watched for, welcomed, wept over when received ; a chain that linked two hearts despite all space—*now*, the sole memorial that they were ever linked at all !—the visions that have faded, the promises that have been broken, the troubles that we thought we could never live through, the schemes of happiness that were then our world—how they look up upon us from the past, like those dead faces that have lain unchanged in the tomb, and present to the gazer who first opens it, a momentary image of reality—that, even as he gazes, crumbles away into dust !

And well if the half-forgotten record chronicle nothing worse than spent anger and altered love; than tears wiped away, and gladness gone! But if our own hands have graven with an iron pen a testimony of the evil within us—if treachery, meanness, falsehood, which seemed *then* so safe, so advantageous, rise in accusing shapes to convict us by proofs of our own showing—terrible indeed are those dry bones, which the breath of God can revive, to stand up an avenging army! And so Miss Conway felt, the instant she became aware that her worst fears were confirmed.

The first letter she opened was addressed to the general by her former confidential friend, requesting him, as a matter of justice, to read what she enclosed; she had ascertained how she had been misrepresented, and in self-defence she sent evidence which she thought must prove satisfactory; but if not, which she was prepared to confirm and amplify, on the slightest intimation that such was his wish.

The evidence in question lay before her—partly in extracts—partly in old letters copied—partly in the originals themselves; and accompanied by occasional explanatory remarks, to connect the whole together, and make it intelligible. It was certainly very cleverly done. More than once, in reading them over, Miss Conway's heart beat faster with the momentary expression, 'I never could have written *that*!' and when this was impossible to maintain, even to herself, a bitter self-reproach stung her, that with all her vicissitudes, all her knowledge of human nature, all her skill in managing others, she could have been so weak, so blind, as to put herself so far into anybody's power. She did not perhaps know, or at least did not consider, in how many instances she had been enabled to keep up the necessary appearances with others, from having relieved her mind by an appeal to that sympathy, which the most self-reliant cannot do entirely without; she only felt the bitterness of detection made more bitter still by being betrayed, which treacherous people like as little when it comes home to them as the most honest.

There they were, as they had met her kind and unsuspecting guardian's astonished eyes—her favourite schemes for securing his fortune—her plans for the quiet disposal of Mrs. Marsden—her spirited satirical sketches of their style of life and society, sparing nobody, but her uncle's intimate friends least of all—her sneers at the new secretary, gradually warming into praise and admiration—her jealousy, perceptible from the first, of the beauty and popularity of her youthful cousin—all explained and made clear in packet No. 1, like the opening chapters of a well-conceived tale.

As she replaced them in their envelope, she drew a long, deep breath.

‘I could not have believed it! And *he* to see all this! And there may be worse yet—the wickedness of that woman surpasses everything I ever knew!’

She had no time to investigate the point any further; Lilla gave notice of a visitor’s step on the stairs, and she had only time to hurry both packets into her muff, lock the desk, and fling the key to her confederate—who darted with it into the next room—before the door opened, and Mr. Randolph walked in.

The instant Miss Conway looked in his face, she recognized the same look, altered as the outward features were, that she had seen on it last when he left her uncle’s house so many years ago. Conscience made a coward of her, in spite of herself; and she had hardly presence of mind enough to pay him the customary greeting, and regret that Mrs. Marsden was not at home.

‘My visit is to Miss Conway,’ he replied, quickly; ‘I heard when I called just now in —— Street, that you were most likely here; and my business being urgent, I took the liberty of following you.’

‘I hope to give a good account of yourself, Mr. Randolph? I understand you came to town a fortnight ago, and never let us know of your return.’

‘I was very much occupied with important business, Miss Conway, and have been several days in —— shire, whence I am only just returned.’

‘What a thing it is to be a traveller! You make no more of your two or three hundred miles every other day, than I should of driving round the Park. Have you begun your famous school yet in that place—what did you say the name was?’

‘I never mentioned it that I am aware of; but if it is interesting to you to know, Miss Conway, it is Cannymoor; and it is on account, moreover, of some communications from thence, which I found awaiting my return to town, that I am here at this moment. Can you spare me a few minutes’ private conversation?’

Her cheeks glowed with a sudden thrill of hope; she glanced, half-fearfully, half-encouragingly in his face, which was much calmer now than on his first entrance. Her mind darted hastily over the scale of probabilities. If those two had met again to renew their hostilities, and her letter to Adelaide had rendered it not unlikely—on whose sympathy would he rely as on hers? If through the revelations of those letters he had been made aware of some of the feelings with which his society had inspired her, might it not have occurred to him, that with her lay the best compensation for her rival’s contempt and scorn? Was it possible that happiness was opening for her, just when despaired of most? Oh, if it were so, how indifferent would those matters become that absorbed her



now!—all her petty schemes and plots and contrivances—even her jealousy and aversion—she could throw them all by, and feel nothing but peace and charity with all the world. It was a glimpse of Canaan from the desert—that desert of disappointment and joylessness to which her own free choice had condemned her all her life, and which, at that moment, in contrast with that land of smiling promise, appeared before her in more than its usual barrenness and desolation. When would he speak? It was but a few minutes that he paused, but they might have been hours for their intensity of feeling. What *his* emotions were, she could not fathom; but when he did speak, his voice was unusually low and deliberate.

‘When I was in your uncle’s house, Miss Conway, did I ever commit any wrong towards you? Did I ever presume on the courtesy shown me, or the advantages of my position, and in any way violate your confidence, or wound your feelings? Answer me as if on oath!’

‘As if on oath,’ she replied, smiling and colouring, ‘you never did—never.’

‘When I left my situation for the reasons I told you of, was I acting honourably, and as I ought, or not?’

‘Like a man of honour; like yourself. My uncle and I never spoke of you or your conduct without the warmest respect and regard.’

‘If then, when I found my actions, my intentions, my words, perverted and misunderstood, I carried away with me the burning sense of injury and shame, that could only be relieved by the humiliation of the offender—was I right, or was I wrong?’

‘Indeed, Mr. Randolph, if I cannot conscientiously say it was right, it was so natural, I cannot call it wrong; and no one has felt and sympathised with you more deeply—more earnestly than I have done.’

‘Is it an injury to be blotted out and forgiven, or not?’

‘Indeed I dare not say it is.’

‘No, you are right, Miss Conway. Such an injury to one who only endeavoured, as in God’s sight, to do what was right by you all, was indeed a piece of heartlessness, that it would require a divine nature to pardon—and such is not mine. And therefore I am here to tell you, face to face, what if you were but a man, you should acknowledge to *me*—that false as you are in thought, in principle, and in word, you are as far beneath my vengeance, as you are unworthy my esteem!’

Miss Conway recoiled involuntarily, stricken dumb by the indignation that blazed from every feature of his face. She held up her hands in terror, as if to keep off the words that were worse than

a blow ; but the long-suppressed passion could not now be kept back.

‘I am come to tell you, however unaccustomed you may be to such plain speaking, that *you*, a Christian gentlewoman—in whose veins runs such brave and honourable blood as should in itself have cried shame on your conduct—*you*, knowing what I did, and why I did it, and what it cost me to do it at all—you dared to tell that innocent and unsuspecting being, that I had spoken of her with indulgent, contemptuous pity, as the victim of an imprudent and unreturned attachment to myself, which compelled me to leave the house at once. You dared to tell her this—silence!—we are not now meeting on social or on equal terms, but as injurer and injured—accuser and accused—and it is for me to speak, and you to hear ! You told her this—knowing that every word I could say would only madden her resentment higher—that every token of that resentment would be a wound in my heart’s core—and that thus we should be severed for ever, each writhing under a sense of wrong. You did all this—for what end is best known to yourself ; and you succeeded. You injured us both in a manner you can never repair ; you made me believe I had been deluded into trusting an angelic exterior with a heart of stone ; that her friendship was but the caprice of the hour, to be dropped at the first touch of conventional pride ; that she had gratified her vanity by my weakness, only to scorn me for its folly. Oh ! what a life of bitterness has that one thought caused me ! And *her*—I dare not think on her share of the injury. I might forget myself, and become degraded in my own eyes. I relieve you now of my presence. Our past friendship is forgotten—our pleasant associations are as if they had never been. Would that the evil you have done could be wiped out as easily !’

He turned to leave the room ; but Miss Conway, who had crouched beneath his denunciations, with her face in her hands, now started up with a cry of anguish. ‘Maurice !—Maurice Gray ! hear me in my own defence !’

He paused irresolutely ; she sprang between him and the door, the tears streaming from her eyes, as she extended her arms to bar his passage. He had never seen her so agitated before ; the agony of her feelings had thrown down every barrier of pride or reserve, and the wild emotion of the woman burst forth as passionately as his own.

‘You taunt, you condemn, you reproach me—and I own with reason. It is vain now to deny it—I did all you say ; and I have added one more untruth to those laid to my charge, in professing you have done me no wrong. Maurice Randolph, you have been the worst enemy I ever knew ! You came to the home where I lived—you forced me, against my will, to care for you—you taught

me tastes, pursuits, ambition, I never thought of before ; and then, when my regard was fully won, and the friend who loved me best, himself believed in and approved its return, you let yourself be dazzled by a younger face, a more brilliant exterior ; and on her who never cared for anything but her own praises and caprices, you flung away the devotion of your life ; and what became of *me* you never paused to think ! Yes, look as you will ! despise me as you will ! you have made me despise myself, and the world, and you, —and I must speak now or die. *Why* did I tell Adelaide that false tale of which you accuse me so bitterly, but because I knew she was not worthy your regard, and that nothing but a conviction of the fact would work your cure ? It was wrong, but I was maddened into it, as I am maddened now into this confession—which however low it may sink me in your opinion, should lower yourself deeper still !

She leaned against the wall with these words, and sobbed so long and so hysterically, he could not, in ordinary humanity, forbear rendering her assistance. Supported on his arm, almost fainting, she was enabled to reach the sofa, and he stood quietly by her side till her agitation was somewhat abated. His gentleness revived something like hope in her bosom ; she looked up to thank him, and murmured, ‘*Forgive me !*’ at which he turned his head away.

‘I have no wish to increase your present distress,’ he said, gravely. ‘The charge you bring against me is a serious one. If I have been the unhappy cause of error on your part, I too must ask to be forgiven. But one thing I must hear explained at once ; and that is, in what manner, in what instance, did your cousin prove herself unworthy your esteem—or mine ?’

There was a visible hesitation ; a brief but sharp struggle in Miss Conway’s mind before answering : one of those periods in life when the good and the evil angel whisper at the same moment—and the rising or falling of the moral nature depends on the contest’s issue. Perhaps, had she had time to consider whether there might not be evidence existing which would controvert her assertions, prudence might have turned the scale in favour of truth ; but she was hurried on by the desperation of jealous dread.

‘I need seek for no stronger proof,’ she said, in a low, faltering tone, ‘than the circumstances of her unfortunate marriage. The imprudence, the self-will, the headstrong rebellion of her conduct during the whole proceeding—the manner in which she deceived *me* throughout—for I had done my utmost to dissuade her, and believed I had succeeded until the very morning of her flight. No one knows how I tried to save her from her own folly ; at the very last, it was I who gave her mother warning, and she was only a few minutes too late. Lady Delaunay herself is my witness, that no

sister could do more than I did for my unhappy cousin ; but my opinion of her character was only confirmed, and my esteem was forfeited for ever.'

'A heavy loss, indeed,' said Randolph, ironically ; then, his indignation again bursting forth beyond control ; 'out of your own lips you convict yourself, false to the core, even in your tears ! You gave her mother warning ?—*you* were deceived into the belief the engagement was broken off ? when it was by your own advice that she had acted, and in the firm confidence of your support and sympathy ! You it was who persuaded her, when once the deed was done, her mother would forgive it—and you tell me now that to that mother you yourself betrayed her ! —'

'It is not true, it is not true, Mr. Randolph ! Who is it that has so poisoned your mind against me ? Is it possible you can have been so weak as to allow *her* to regain an influence——'

'Silence !' he said again, in a voice that made her quail ; 'silence, slanderer ! your day is over—your power is past ! You have helped me to the certainty of what I already conjectured, that between mother and daughter there exists but one real obstacle, and that is, your baneful mediation ! Your double-dealing and treachery have kept them apart for your own ends ; it is time to see what truth and justice can do. I give you fair warning, and now, plot against *me* as you please !'

It was some little time after she was left alone before Miss Conway moved. A dull, paralyzing sense of wretchedness, the wretchedness of failure and detection, had crept over every nerve and fibre, and deprived her even of the power of thought. By degrees, the necessity of facing the coming peril, the sting of mortified pride, and regard despised, and the bitter desire for revenge, helped her to shake off this torpor ; and then she recollected Miss Brittan, and for the first time with a pang of alarm. She opened the door into the next room ; the inner one was ajar ; the young lady was ensconced in an arm-chair, with a French volume in her hand, and looked up as she entered, with a demure face, in which the anxious observer could read nothing. She yawned as she laid down the book, and remarked she was getting tired of these stories ; she did not care if she never saw another.

Something defiant in the tone of voice struck Miss Conway's quick ear. Her own became immediately pleasant and cheerful.

'Why did you not come back, my dear Lilla ? You would have been very much amused ; but perhaps you could hear us even here. We grew so hot in our argument, any one might have supposed we were quarrelling.'

'I never know the difference,' said Miss Brittan, dryly. 'People generally do quarrel when they argue.'

'I dare say you wondered what it could all be about, my dear ; or were you too happy with dear Balzac to attend ?'

'I hate Balzac,' said Lilla, impatiently, pushing the book away ; 'and I wish you had never brought me any of them. They are downright wicked.'

'You are growing wonderfully particular all of a sudden, my dear.'

'It is time I did, I think.'

'High time, indeed, if this is the tone you assume with me, Lilla ; I hardly call it kind or grateful.'

I don't think there is much to be grateful for in being lent bad books, and having to trick everybody to hide them ; I can't say I do.'

'Indeed !' said Miss Conway, fixing on her a menacing look that brought the blood to the young girl's face ; 'indeed, I am sorry to hear it.' She turned to the door with an appearance of great indignation, but paused as she was leaving the room, to observe in a milder tone, 'I may have been weak in my indulgence, my dear Lilla, knowing how few pleasures you had ; but it is hardly *your* place to reproach me with it. However, as my regard seems of so little value, I hope you may soon meet with a more prudent—I will not say a more sincere friend. I hear my aunt's carriage. Good morning.'

And without seeming even to hear Miss Brittan's entreaty for her return, she hastened downstairs, just as Mrs. Marsden was slowly coming up—with the air of a person who had gone through immense exertion on conscientious motives, and was reaping the fruits thereof in self-complacent serenity of mind.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

Urge me no more, I'll not be moved.  
Nor earth, nor heaven shall alter my decree ;  
Urnolph—he dies ! *Old Play.*

THE first thing that met Lady Delaunay's eyes as she entered her own home was Mr. Randolph's card. She took it up with a strong expression of pleasure at his return, and after a few moments' consideration, sat down to write a note ; a proceeding which, in Miss Conway's anxious frame of mind, gave her more uneasiness than she would have liked to confess. Her aunt observed her looks of curiosity as she rang the bell.

'Only to ask if he can call upon me to-morrow morning, my dear. Bertram's letter to-day has decided me to lose no more time ; it is a real injustice to his tenant ; and your intelligent friend has undertaken to explain the whole case to him, with the help of a memorandum in his possession. I own I was in hopes,' she

added with a sigh, 'that Delaunay would have returned by this time; but with these new plans, there is no knowing now how long he may be away.'

'Then is he—is Mr. Randolph actually going to follow him, and at your request?' asked Charlotte, in unutterable consternation.

'I could not have requested such a service, my love; but it was irresistible when offered. I have no doubt he will start immediately.'

'But will he—will not Delaunay think it an intrusion?'

'Scarcely with my introduction, I should imagine,' said Lady Delaunay, as she turned to deliver the note to Anderson, desiring it might be taken immediately.

Her niece durst say no more. She flew to her room, drank eau-de-Cologne and water, bathed her head and temples, till their throbbing was a little calmed down; and then sat with clenched hands, meditating. The church clock struck. It wanted an hour to post-time. There was yet an opportunity, if she would seize it. And yet—what was she to do?

She walked up and down the room; stopped before the glass, and started at the haggard, terrible expression of her own face. Age seemed to have swept over every feature since the morning. She pressed her hands to her eyes, to shut out the sight; but only to bring up a vision more fearful still—Maurice Randolph, with his indomitable energy and determination, forcing conviction upon Delaunay's easy nature; her deceit unmasked, her ends exposed, the brother returning as champion and advocate, the mother convinced and appeased, the daughter and her child received with open arms, the services of the chivalrous friend acknowledged by all, and the recompense of his long fidelity bestowed at last, while *she*—what was to become of her? Was she to look on calmly at all this, while she had brain to devise, and courage to dare a remedy? Never!

She seized writing materials, and her pen flew, as if winged by an evil spirit. Her eyes hot and dry, her hands and feet cold, her lips swollen with the compression of her teeth—she still wrote on, what she durst not read over; sealed and directed the letter, and rang for her maid, desiring her to post it *herself* immediately.

'Is the postage to be paid, ma'am?' asked the latter, glancing in some surprise at the face of her mistress.

'Oh, I forgot! Yes, certainly. There is half a sovereign; you can get some stamps with the change; be sure you put the letter in *yourself*, Forrest.'

'Certainly, ma'am. Can I get you anything before I go?'

'No, thank you. I have a bad headache, and shall rest till you come back. Be quick, for the letter is of importance.'

Even her own well-trained attendant's eye was oppressive, and it

was a relief to lock the door upon her and her civilities; though the rest she spoke of was to be hers no more. All she could do was to fling herself on her bed, and lie there with her back to the light till it was time to dress.

Punctual to the hour named, Randolph called the next day, and was shown into Lady Delaunay's private boudoir. It was a small room, much plainer in its appointments than any other in the house. A few religious prints from old artists on the wall; a stand with a large oak-bound Bible; some massive, curiously carved brackets and chairs, and a writing-table of modern make after the same pattern; book-shelves carefully filled, chiefly with volumes of divinity, church history, and devotional poetry, were the principal furniture of this favourite apartment, in which Lady Delaunay now received her visitor with more than her usual graciousness of manner, thanking him for his prompt and punctual attention to her wishes.

'You know the true way of doing a kindness, Mr. Randolph, and thus add to its value tenfold. But you must pay the penalty; for people are always ready to encroach on ready good-will like yours, and I am going to ask you a favour.'

'That is to say, you are going to do *me* one, Lady Delaunay.'

'Your politeness is unanswerable. Draw your chair to the table for a moment, and be kind enough to read these over.'

She gave him a letter received the preceding day from her son, and the answer she had just written. Maurice read as he was desired, and his face brightened visibly.

'The sooner I start for Paris, the better, I see.'

'You really will? I feel quite ashamed of asking it, but you see my predicament. I rather thought my son would have returned by this time, but as you see, he has met with some antiquarian friends, who are going to visit all the Normandy churches, and are pressing him to join them. Once engaged in an expedition of that kind, it is in vain to calculate upon his movements. I do not like his agent; my son is sadly careless about business letters, and you are the only living witness of the promise to the present tenant. In undertaking this troublesome task, you will serve an honest, deserving man and his family, as well as me and mine, on whom I can truly say, it will be conferring lasting obligation.'

'And it will go hard with me,' thought Maurice to himself, 'if I do not find some way of doing you all a service more lasting and valuable still, little as you may dream it now.'

He did not care to tell her how exactly her plans jumped with his; but coming to the point at once, soon made all the necessary arrangements in a business-like manner, and having carefully put up his credentials, announced his purpose of starting that night.

‘Fortunately, I had just completed the affairs which brought me to town. I have not been idle since I last had the honour of seeing your ladyship.’

‘Ah, your school? Is it all settled? Mr. Powys was asking after you only a few days ago.’

‘I think even Mr. Powys will be satisfied this time, that I am not going to work in defiance of established authority. The rector has given full consent, and the very ground for the site is promised me—besides gratuitous instruction and encouragements without end. But all this has not made me forgetful of your ladyship’s pleasant but rather uncomplimentary challenge, and here I am, ready at your pleasure, to stand or fall by my bet.’

‘The lace?’ said Lady Delaunay, starting, as he drew out a small parcel, carefully tied up; ‘I had nearly forgotten my liabilities, I confess. True, I did allow you to make a rash wager on the subject, but I am quite ready for an amicable compromise. You had better agree to draw the stakes.’

‘I will agree to nothing of the kind; I’ll have my bond, or there is no law in Venice; but before judgment is passed, may I ask if you remember the circumstances of the story connected with it, and the suggestions I received from you?’

‘Yes; I remember telling you of a widow of the name of Dalton, living at Apswell—if that is what you mean.’

‘You did, Lady Delaunay, and your conjecture proved correct. I only returned from Apswell yesterday.’

She smiled, as if pleased. ‘I call that real practical charity, my dear sir; many will give their money, but not their time and pains. I hope yours were not thrown away.’

‘That remains to be proved; I cannot say I am sanguine, and yet I did all I could—haunted as I was by the last sight I had of the daughter’s suffering and imploring face. I stayed nearly a week in the place, at an old friend’s house, and saw Mrs. Dalton every day, and attacked her by every form of argument. It took some time to ascertain that she really was the person I sought; and when she became aware of my errand, she assumed the defensive in good serious earnest. First it was by a coldness so impenetrable, I might as well have tried to thaw a tunnel through an iceberg; then she warmed into resentment at any gentleman that *was* a gentleman interfering in a lone woman’s family concerns, and how would gentlefolks like to have their private troubles raked up, and talked about by strangers, she would like to know? This ebullition calmed down by assurances of respect, the crust gave way a little more, and it was a relief to see her worn, gloomy face covered with tears, though it was a grief of which anger formed the principal ingredient. I found we had wronged her in one respect; the



chaplain's letter from the jail never reached her ; she had fled from her native parish on her daughter's committal, and left no clue by which she might be traced. The disgrace brought on her good name had crushed her to the earth, and when I appealed to her on religious grounds, I found that, like one of Scott's old Covenanters, her religion had very little mercy in it—in fact, that she looked on her daughter as hopelessly lost. Here I was quite at fault—she knew much more Scripture than I did, and quoted it twice as well ; and between my distaste for her doctrine, and my inability to explain a better, we should soon have been quarrelling as hotly as Greeks of the Lower Empire, when I bethought me of what Lady Delaunay had said, and as nearly as I could, repeated it word for word. I told her, as you told *me*—that to reject true repentance was to sin against the universal law ; that if the whole world cast off the wanderer, her mother's arms should still be her refuge ; and that in withholding the hope of improvement from a spirit that God had broken, she made herself responsible, not only for the evil it yet might do, but for the good it might have done ! She seemed so startled, I left the words to take effect, without weakening their force by any of mine ; and so my mission ended. The guilt remains now at her door—my hands are clean. If the heart of the penitent breaks for want of pardon, I, at least, have done my part to prevent it, and can do no more.'

A short silence followed this, for Lady Delaunay was too much struck by his manner, and the unusual emphasis laid on the concluding sentences, to offer any comment. He soon spoke again, however, in his ordinary tone, apologizing for having taken up so much of her time about a matter in which she could be so little interested ; and then began deliberately to undo the fastenings of his packet.

'Stop,' she said, arresting this movement ; 'let me first produce mine.' And unlocking a drawer of her writing-table, she took out an ivory box, in which some old point of rare beauty was hoarded from vulgar eyes.

'There, sir—was I bigoted in my preference—or illiberal in my doubts ? You may have seen this before, for my uncle prided himself on its rarity and value.'

And with good reason, Randolph admitted ; he had only *once* seen any that was equal to it ; but if Lady Delaunay would look at *this*—

She did look, and that as intently as if she were counting every slender thread ; and when at last she raised her eyes to those of Randolph, her face was pale, and painfully contracted.

'Where—how ?' was all that, in spite of her lion-like will, her lips could articulate.

He calmly replied that he received it through his friend, the Rector of Cannymoor.

Lady Delaunay fixed on him such a look as had made many a stout heart quail, with the sense of being read through and through. His bronzed face burnt beneath it, and its strong muscles worked with the emotion he could not entirely hide; but he stood the ordeal undauntedly, and even while her gaze was on him, he saw its keen light soften and grow dim, as the worn, dry lids drooped beneath the weight of an unutterable woe.

‘One word,’ she said, in a voice unnaturally quiet, ‘as from friend to friend. You knew what lace this was when you named it to me?’

‘I did, Lady Delaunay. I had seen it before, as well as that in your possession.’

‘Thank you for your frankness,’ said Lady Delaunay, trying to smile, with a powerful and tolerably successful effort to resume her usual composure. ‘I am glad, since it was to be so, that it should be in hands so friendly. And now, since I own myself fairly defeated, let me pay my debt. I am sure you are the last person to require of me anything I cannot with propriety perform.’

‘My request, madam, is nevertheless a bold one, and I must first stipulate that it may not offend. It is no less, since you set so much value on the lace, than to entreat your acceptance of it.’

Again she looked full at him, and there was an unusual glistening in her keen eyes.

‘You are a strange combination,’ she said, slowly. ‘Your ways are those of a courtier, but there is something behind that makes me almost afraid of you. Let me be sure you are my friend, for I should be sorry to encounter you as my foe.’

He leaned across the table—his face all one glow, and his voice tremulous with passionate earnestness.

‘Oh, Lady Delaunay! if as a friend I dared indeed to speak to you, should you have courage enough to bid me speak boldly out?’

‘Stop, sir!’ she said, in violent agitation; ‘not a word more!’

The tone was not to be disputed; he folded his arms on his chest, and his head drooped despondingly. As soon as she could command herself, she spoke again.

‘I know you mean well—well and chivalrously; I honour your intentions, and forgive your having presumed to do what I could scarcely have forgiven under other circumstances. Forgive me in return, if I remind you, that there are wounds that quiver at the pointing of a finger. No more of that; you understand, and will bear with me. The subject will not be resumed by either of us. With regard to *this*,’ she continued, pointing to the lace with a return of her former kindness of manner, ‘do not forget, even in

the pride of victory, that it is wiser not to drive the vanquished to extremity. Terms a shade more moderate are more likely to be faithfully carried out. You have made me thoroughly understand that there is nothing I can grant that you care to accept; but——'

'You are right, Lady Delaunay; it was a piece of presumption on my part, for which I ask forgiveness. I modify my request. Keep it at least till my return; and let it be a pledge to remind you that you owe me a boon as its redemption-price. Will you promise me this?'

'I am bound to do so; but what can you have to ask that you shrink from asking now?'

'You will know in due time; *now* it would be of little use. Perhaps I wish to deserve it more.'

He rose as he spoke, and stood before her.

'Lady Delaunay, I may fail in my errand, but it will not be for want of trying what zeal and earnestness can do. Bid me God-speed, and in the strength of that blessing let me go!'

She held out her hand, and as he bent over it, pressed his warmly.

'An old woman's blessing,' she said, with a gentle but grave smile, 'is often the best service she can offer; and since you are not too proud to accept it, be assured it is yours. God prosper your way, and direct your path, and bring you safely back to claim the grateful thanks of those whom you so kindly serve!'

As the door closed on his retiring footsteps, a sigh of exhaustion escaped from Lady Delaunay; the carefully guarded features relaxed, and her hands dropped feebly on the paper before her. The tears gathered slowly in her eyelids, and, one by one, fell on Adelaide's lace—those tears that cost old age so much, wrung from sources well-nigh spent, and tracing in the cheek those lines which, if not quickly kissed away by affection, can never more be smiled away by joy. Unrelenting in purpose—fixed in her resolution not to yield one step till the rebellious head was in the dust before her—there was yet bursting from her soul's innermost a cry of bitter anguish, like David's of old over the lost and hardened Absalom; and could her death but have made her daughter what she had hoped once to see her, she too would have joined in that vain yearning, 'Would God I had died for thee!'

The lace was returned to its envelope; the letters, the accounts, were all thrust aside; the mother's heart was too sick to attend to anything. She went to the stand where her large Bible lay always ready, and sought for comfort there.

For years she had been giving her strength, her substance, her intellect to God's service; rising early, constant in His temple—

denying herself luxuries that she might have more to give—seeking Him with all her heart and soul, as she believed—and yet, in her hours of solitude, the long-sought light of His countenance—where was it? Strong sense of duty, high, unflinching principle, marked every step she took in life; when the eye saw her, it blessed her, and when the ear heard her, it bore witness to her; why could she not find the rest that remaineth to the people of God? Why was she ever opening and studying the Book of Life, and yet ever turning unsatisfied away?

It was a question she had often asked, and no answer had ever come. There was something lacking, and she knew not what. The promises, the consolations, the stores of strength and peace, were all before her, and yet she was weary and heavy laden—disappointed and lonely in heart; and the living spring that quickened thousands, to her seemed like Marah's waters. So it was now; and after awhile, she closed the Bible with another heavy sigh, accepting, as she had before, the trial of her faith and courage. An old quaint volume of divinity lay near at hand, and as she mechanically turned the pages, the first text that arrested her eye was—'*Yet doth He devise means that His banish'd be not expelled from Him.*'

She dropped the book, and bowed her grey head on her hands.

'Come, there is still some comfort left. There are wanderers I can reach—hearts I can touch—young feet I can keep from going astray—and so that His work be done, what matters it whether it be in darkness or in light?'

And as she had often done before, in similar times of depression, she went immediately about some of her numerous errands of mercy, and was engaged with them the greater part of the day.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Where is she gone? Haply, despair had seized her.—*Shakespeare.*

A VISIT to the City—another to the Foreign Office—and a third to the Rev. Mr. Powys, consumed so much of the afternoon, that it was past five when Randolph strode into Henry Lyndon's chambers. The busy lawyer could have wished him anywhere else at that moment, but a glance showed him there was sound cause for the interruption. Maurice had pulled out a document, more or less intelligible, and showed it significantly.

'I was right, you see.'

'Passport, eh? Whence, and when?'

'Paris *via* Dover and Calais, to-night.'

'To find whom?'

‘As I told you—Bertram, fifth Earl Delaunay—Viscount Chester—lineal descendant of Rollo, and so forth. My credentials are here, and it will go hard with me if I do not beat a little more truth into his illustrious Norman understanding, than it has ever dreamed of yet.’

‘It is no hard matter to get the truth in—to keep it there is another thing. I wish you joy of the task. How did you succeed to-day elsewhere?’

‘Don’t speak of it. I made a mistake on impulse—but I moved her, in spite of herself. She is a grand creature, blinded, as the best of us are at times. But her eyes shall be opened, if I live. And that reminds me—I want you to make my will.’

‘Are you such a timid sailor as that comes to, that you make your will before you cross the Channel?’

‘Not quite; but no one knows what may happen, and my mind will be easier. Here is an outline of my wishes; can you get it done for me in time?’

‘You may well ask; it is wonderful what consciences the general public have. Let me look over your memorandum. “Legacies, Sophia Home, school-house at Cannymoor”—humph! Adelaide what? Ball? Who is the lady, may I presume to ask?’

‘A Cannymoor godchild. There, go on; no criticising.’

‘Come, this is more to the point. “Emma, daughter of Henry and Emma Lyndon.” Don’t mention it, my dear fellow—the will shall be ready in time, with all the pleasure in life, for I can tell you for your comfort, we are going to have a change of weather. You are just in time for the equinoctial gales.’

‘I am gale-proof by this time, so don’t flatter yourself; but go on.’

‘“Residuary legatee, Walter Lyndon.” It is well to be him. You are determined that high-spirited lady shall be obliged to you when you are dead, if not when you are living.’

‘I have done her quite enough wrong, Lyndon, to be glad of even a reversionary prospect of amends. If I live, that boy shall never want a friend and defender; if I die, he is provided for. Meanwhile, will you accept the office of his trustee and my executor?’

‘Certainly, my dear fellow; and considering the rate at which I live, compared with your robust organization, I may promise a dozen such services without much risk.’

‘Then I am satisfied. One thing more. If you are in want of an ally during my absence, here is the address of one who is much interested in the cause—Mr. Powys, of St. Nathaniel’s; I have just seen him, and he is ready and willing to help, whenever he has opportunity. He is much respected by Lady Delaunay; and the way they skirmish occasionally is pleasant to see.’

‘May I live to see it, so the victory be secure. The more allies we have the better. What shall I say when I write to Canny-moor?’

‘Tell your kind and amiable wife, if you will, what I am going to do. Tell her, I owe her a great deal already; I shall owe her still more, if she will comply with my request, not to attempt any explanation with Lady Adelaide on the subject of that terrible misunderstanding, which I dare not think of now. Foul play there has been, and she shall know it; but not till it has been atoned for. When I return, if I *do* return successful, let me at least have that to plead. I long, I thirst for her pardon; but it must be spoken by her own lips. You are quite sure she is recovering?’

‘You saw my wife’s account, that she has been out several times, and is fast regaining strength. So much for your scepticism about doctors.’

‘I will never abuse another. Poisoning shall be a science, wholesale murder enlightened philanthropy; Ousel shall be a Mozart, and Spindler an angel in human form. By the way, I heard a report to-day about that bank into which the money was paid to your uncle’s account, that I did not like. My friend did not believe it, but you might as well be on your guard. If all be true that Ousel told me, the sooner that business is settled, the better it will be for all parties.’

‘I am quite of your mind there; thank you for the hint. And now if you want *your* business done, you must be kind enough to go.’

‘And so,’ wrote Henry to his wife, the next day, ‘he is gone on as well-meant a Quixotic errand as ever man undertook, and which, if ever there was a man likely to accomplish, that man is himself. I am inclined to agree with him, that it will be much better not to attempt any explanations with Lady Adelaide. The case is so complicated, and the parties concerned are so peculiar to deal with, that a third person interposing is as likely to make mischief as not. So whatever romantic visions you and the rector may have been indulging in, I must beg you to lay aside; and let our friend speak for himself, when he has clearly made up his mind what he means to say. I am much mistaken if he is not aiming pretty high; but I have been mistaken before, and may be so again.

‘My curiosity was rather excited last evening, and my night’s rest suffered in consequence. Randolph put up at the Waterloo, on his return from ——shire; and after seeing him start for the station, and resting myself in the coffee-room for ten minutes or so, I was just coming out, when I heard a servant in the Delaunay

livery anxiously inquiring if Mr. Randolph was still there, as he had a note to deliver to him. Of course it was rather too late, but whether Jeames was to blame or not, I cannot say. For his own sake, I hope not, which is generous on my part, considering how he kept me awake.'

The cause of the above incident was indeed one that the lawyer would have been clever to guess. The servant had been ordered to make all possible haste, and had he obeyed, would have been in time; but choosing to think there was no great hurry, he had the pleasure of returning to say he was just too late. It had struck Miss Conway, during their *tête-à-tête* dinner, that her aunt, whom she had scarcely seen before all day, was unusually grave and thoughtful; and though she knew her too well not to be confident that if anything to her discredit had been insinuated by Maurice Randolph, Lady Delaunay would have instantly summoned her to speak in her own defence, still, anxious and harassed, she dreaded she knew not what, and every moment increased her nervousness. When Anderson came in, bringing back the note, to say Mr. Randolph was already gone, she turned so white her aunt must have observed it, had she not been already so preoccupied.

'Let the carriage be round at nine o'clock,' was all Lady Delaunay said, and quietly resumed her work.

'Are you going out to-night?' asked Miss Conway, when she could do so without betraying discomposure.

'Only for an hour or so; I am sorry to leave you alone, my dear Charlotte, but I want a little conversation with Mrs. Marsden.'

The manner in which this was said, forbade further questioning; Miss Conway swallowed her curiosity, and passed the time as best she could. It required some courage to bear such solitude as hers. Her aunt, however, returned sooner than she had expected, and evidently so much disturbed, as to be glad to confide her trouble to her much-trusted companion.

'When I was out this afternoon,' she said, 'it suddenly occurred to me that a letter on business, which I wrote last night, had not been sent to the post. I was not sure whether I might not have left it out; but directly I came in, I inquired, and as none had been seen, went to look in my boudoir. Unfortunately, papers do accumulate so fast in spite of all precaution, that it took me some time to hunt in the drawers of my writing-table, and all to no purpose, till I recollected the one I seldom open, but which I had certainly opened this morning, to show Mr. Randolph my point lace; and there I found the letter. I was just closing the drawer, when I thought I saw something that did belong to me, and half hidden by some tracts (which I remember buying some little time

ago, and wondering what had become of them) was a discoloured packet, apparently of letters—sealed, and endorsed in a handwriting that I could not but recognize—"Private Papers, No. 3."

Miss Conway's eyes glittered, but she waited to hear more.

'I was aware from himself, that Mr. Randolph was in possession of some of my uncle's papers, intrusted to him by Mrs. Marsden; and at first I thought he might have left them to-day by mistake. I tried, however, to recall when I had opened that drawer; and at last recollected doing so the day I met Mr. Randolph first. The argument we had in the carriage about point-lace put it into my head, when I came home, to take out and examine mine; and I remember now, perfectly, that finding it was later than I had supposed, I hastily threw the tracts and some other papers lying on the table, into the same drawer; and I suppose, this same packet with them—by whatever means it got there.'

Miss Conway made a mechanical gesture of agreement.

I wrote at once to Mr. Randolph, to ask if he could throw any light on the matter; and as he was gone, I went to ask Mrs. Marsden. She recognized the packet directly, as one Mr. Randolph had lost, he could not tell how; and told me, she meant to show them to me as soon as she had recovered them all. She kept the others in my uncle's old writing-case, that always stands on her table, she said; but when she attempted to open it, the key was missing from her bunch. Lilla Brittan and the maid-servants searched everywhere that could be thought of; but it was growing late, and I was obliged to come away.'

'Most extraordinary!' said Miss Conway, drawing a long breath. 'You left the other packet there!'

'Of course. There was no time to examine it then. But, do you know, Charlotte, Lilla Brittan's manner was very unlike herself. I could not understand it. Two or three times I found her close to me, as if going to tell me something; but directly I turned to listen, she changed colour, and made some excuse for moving away.'

'I *hope*,' said Charlotte, shaking her head, 'that she has not been deceiving us. I have always been rather afraid of Belle Unwin's influence, and I have reason to think they correspond.'

'Indeed! I am sorry to hear it. She could not have a worse adviser. I shall beg her to break it off as soon as she can. Have you ever seen any evidence of doing her harm?'

'I am sorry to say I have. I fear she is not always straightforward and truthful.'

'Oh, poor child, I grieve for her, if it be so. What will she ever be, without openness and truth? I can only hope you may be mistaken; but if you are not, something must be done.'



'I wish I may be mistaken,' said Miss Conway, with a significant sigh, as she left the room.

Her plan, the result of a long, sleepless night, was to repair alone the next morning to Bryanstone Square, relying on her own skill and resources to turn this unexpected occurrence to advantage, and confirm her young ally's fidelity, either by persuasion or terror; but while she was revolving the most plausible form of argument to convince her aunt of the advantages of this arrangement, it was overturned by a note from Mrs. Marsden, begging to see them both as soon as possible. Neither liked to own to the other how anxious, though from widely different motives, each felt at this summons, and the drive was taken almost in silence. They found poor Mrs. Marsden in a state of nervousness, that made her look quite ill.

'What do you think, dear Mary? What do you think, Charlotte? You know about that key. I wish nobody would ever give me anything to take care of, I am sure. Well, my maid came in to me this morning and told me she had just seen Miss Brittan with my bunch of keys in her hand, slipping on the one we had lost; and sure enough, when I came to look, the key was there; but I cannot get her to own it, or to say a word, and so I thought I would send to you.'

Miss Conway looked anxiously at Lady Delaunay. 'It may be, after all, only a silly practical joke,' she suggested; 'girls are such ridiculous creatures!'

'It may,' said Lady Delaunay; 'but if so, it will be the last of its kind. However, we will hear her in self-defence before we judge. Where is the poor foolish child?'

The question had to be repeated before Mrs. Marsden heard it, but she at once lowered her own voice, as if in apprehension.

'Why, she is in the next room. To tell you the truth, I left her there; for it made me quite nervous to see her looking so fierce as she has done all the morning; she actually kicked poor pussy for coming in her way, and altogether I did not know what to do. Suppose you just go in quietly, Charlotte, and see what you can make of her.'

Miss Conway needed no second hint; she hurried to find her confederate, and suggest the line of defence she had devised. She was but ill-received.

'This is all your doing, Miss Conway, and I can't bear it, and I won't,' cried Lilla, starting up directly she entered. 'I would not turn tell-tale without letting you know first; but now you are here to answer for yourself, they *must* know it was no fault of mine!'

'Gently; we shall be overheard,' said Miss Conway, placidly;

‘there is no occasion to be violent. How was it you did not replace the key sooner?’

‘How could I, when she took it into her head to keep the bunch in her pocket till this morning? I did all I could, but Blanchard came prying and peeping, and taxed me with hiding the key; and because I told her to mind her own business, she must needs go and make all this fuss; and as it is your affair, you must get out of it.’

‘The first thing to decide is how to get *you* out of it, my dear. Attend to me, and I will bring you through. I will tell you what you must say.’

‘I must just say this, first; I cannot tell lies, to please you or anybody.’

‘But you can *act* them, Lilla.’

‘That is, thanks to you, then; and I know *you* are not over particular; and somebody else knows it too—so there.’

Miss Conway’s face grew livid for a moment, and as Lilla saw it approach her own, its transformation made her recoil involuntarily.

‘Lilla,’ she said, in a low, hissing whisper, ‘you have said now what you shall repent as long as you live. You have chosen for yourself, and as I warned you before, you must reap the consequences.’

She opened the door between the two rooms.

‘Will you come in here for a moment?’

They both complied, looking very grave, and no wonder; for Mrs. Marsden had the writing case in her hands, which they had just opened, and, as Miss Conway could have told them beforehand, had found empty.

‘I am sorry to say, my dear aunt,’ said Charlotte, with a deeply pained expression of countenance, ‘that our young friend is in a mood I cannot understand at all. She will not mind *me*—but I hope *you* may be more successful.’

‘Lilla Brittan,’ said Lady Delaunay, quietly, ‘since you had the key of this case, what have you done with the contents?’

‘I never touched them,’ said Lilla, doggedly.

‘Who else had the key, Lilla?’

‘Whoever opened the case. It was not I, that is all I know.’

‘That is *not* all you know, Lilla,’ said Lady Delaunay, her voice and eye growing sterner. ‘You knew it was missing last night; you pretended to look for it; I even remember—I wish I did not!—that you said you had never seen it.’

‘Did I?’ said Lilla, bursting into tears; ‘then I told a lie, but I can’t and won’t tell another. *She* knows all about it, if she would only speak.’

‘*I*, Lilla?’ said Miss Conway, in a tone of mild reproach.

'Take care, Miss Brittan,' said Lady Delaunay; 'it is a very bad sign to begin attacking your kindest friends.'

'She is no friend to *me*,' sobbed Lilla, passionately; 'she tries to make me as bad and deceitful as herself, and I hate her for it—that I do!'

'This is growing past bearing,' said Miss Conway. 'I am accustomed to ingratitude, but not to be insulted to my face. Listen to me, Lilla, if you can, calmly, for a moment. Supposing that for a joke you took some papers out, and have put them by, meaning to return them, would it not be better at once, now you see how it vexes your friends, to say so, and give them up? Are you sure they are not all this time close at hand—in that table-drawer, for instance?'

'You know they are not! You may look if you like.'

This was what Miss Conway expected.

'Just to satisfy yourself, my dear aunt,' she said, turning to Lady Delaunay, who was nearest to the drawer; 'suppose you do.'

'I grieve to doubt any one's word,' said Lady Delaunay; 'where there has been one deviation from truth, there may be another; but I would rather believe Miss Brittan's assertion that there is no occasion for me to look.'

Miss Conway laid her hand on the drawer. 'Shall I open it, Lilla? or is there anything here you would be ashamed for Lady Delaunay to see?'

'No—I mean yes!' cried Lilla, turning suddenly scarlet, and darting forwards to stop her. 'Don't, Miss Conway! please don't!'

But Miss Conway was too quick in her movements; she pulled the drawer open with a smile, and Lady Delaunay could not help seeing the contents. She looked at her niece in consternation, took up one small volume after another, and her face grew darker as she read the names. She signed to Charlotte to close the drawer, and turned on the culprit a look, so much more terrible from its poignant sorrow and disappointment, that the utmost vehemence could have been, that Lilla, after a choked effort at an excuse, with a cry of despair rushed out of the room.

A long and sorrowful consultation was held in her absence. That her deceit was but too surely deep-rooted, it needed no insinuations of Miss Conway to prove; it was quite enough that she should have been secretly procuring a mischievous indulgence, in defiance of the known wishes of her best friend; and the question now became serious—what was to be done next?

To Lady Delaunay it was a real grief that she could not conceal. That all her kindness, her care, her anxiety, should be so lightly

valued and so ill repaid, cut her to the heart. Still, she would not give up the hope of winning her stray sheep back to truth and sincerity.

‘I should not wish her to remain with you,’ she said to Mrs. Marsden. ‘You have done all you could for her, but she must be under stricter care, and with more constant occupation. Let her come up to my house to-morrow morning, and I will talk to her myself, and see what I can do. At present I have not self-command enough, and it will be better, perhaps, that she should have a little time to reflect.’

‘I wonder if Miss Unwin had anything to do with those books,’ said Miss Conway. ‘I am afraid she imbibed the taste from her; and if so, we may find she has acquired some of her spirit too.’

‘It shows how wrong I was to overlook that girl’s first offence. It was a weakness I am not often guilty of, and never will be again. But in *this* instance, I hope the mischief has not gone too far, and that we may save her yet. God grant we may! I shall go at once and consult Mr. Powys.’

The breakfast hour in ——— Street was rather later than usual the next morning, and was only just over, when the Countess and her niece were startled by the most unexpected entry of old Mrs. Marsden, in such a distracted state, it was some time before they could compose her sufficiently to explain the cause of this unwonted exertion; but at last she sobbed out, ‘That poor unhappy young creature!—I only hope we are not to blame—it is no doing of mine, I am sure—but read that, Mary. It was not sealed; but it is meant for you more than for me.’

Lady Delaunay took the scarcely legible pencilled note that was offered to her, and turned very pale as she read.

‘I have been very wrong, and I knew I was all the time I was doing it; but I am not so bad as I seem to be—indeed I am not! Dear, dear Lady Delaunay, I am so very, very unhappy, I do not know how to bear it; and I cannot look you in the face, and hear you say to me what you did to Belle Unwin; so I am going away where you will never hear, or be troubled with me again. I shall never see any one so good as you—never! but I know you never forgive disobedience and deceit, and as I have told you one lie, you would not believe me if I tried to explain, so it is of no use. There is one person who might speak up for me, but I know she won’t. I am so miserable, so very miserable, that, perhaps, if you saw me you would pity me; but you never shall, though I shall always be your very, very grateful,

‘LILLA BRITAN.’

'What does this mean? where is the child?' cried Lady Delaunay.

'Where, indeed? If I only knew, I should be easier; but she is gone.'

'Gone? When did she go? Why was I not told?'

'She told nobody, my dear Mary; she must have slipped out in the evening, for nobody saw her, and her bed was not slept in, and she took some of her things with her, and left the rest all about the room. I know she had a little money, for I gave her some not long ago, but not enough to last her any time. I am sure if I had thought it would have come to this, I would not have said a word about that stupid key—that I wouldn't, poor dear little creature! Only to think if she should have thrown herself into the river! I have thought of nothing else ever since.'

She sobbed heartily as she spoke, not without evident tokens of resentment against them both, as the indirect cause of this misfortune. To this Lady Delaunay paid no attention; she sat as one stunned, her head resting on her hands. But Miss Conway to whom the news had brought a relief she durst not show, began eagerly to demonstrate, it could only be the cowardice of guilt that had led to such a step, as nobody could accuse her aunt of undue severity to any one. 'If she has been for some time in the habit of deceiving us all, no wonder she is frightened at exposure and detection. Depend upon it she will soon be tired of wandering about, and as soon as her money is spent, we shall have her coming back, begging and praying us to forgive her only this once.'

'And I am sure she should not beg and pray long, as far as I am concerned,' said Mrs. Marsden. 'I have no idea of being so hard on such young things; and if she came back to me to-morrow, she should be welcome, and not a word would I have cast up against her. I always thought if that had been done to poor little Ada——'

'Dear Mrs. Marsden, do consider what you are saying!' interrupted Miss Conway, aghast at this startling turn of the conversation; but in her turn she was checked by the quiet voice of her aunt, who rose with the calm decision of one whose mind was made up.

'Whoever has been in fault, it will be time enough to decide when the evil is remedied. If it is fear of me that has driven this poor girl to this step, it is the more incumbent on me to stop the consequences before it is too late. Let us settle at once what to do, that no time may be wasted. She may be traced by making inquiries at the neighbouring shops and cab-stands, which I shall commission Anderson to do. He has been so long in my confidence, I can trust to his discretion as well as to his experience. You, my dear cousin, cannot do better than go home, and keep

your servants from talking about what has happened. The less noise we make the better.'

'She ought not to be alone,' observed Miss Conway, in a low voice. 'Either you or I ought to be with her in her excited, nervous state——'

'Well thought of, my love. You had better arrange at once to stay with her as long as she wishes for your society. I will let you know the result of our inquiries as soon as I can.'

This arrangement being agreed to without discussion, as Lady Delaunay's arrangements were always expected to be, Miss Conway returned forthwith to Bryanstone Square to devote herself to her kinswoman, and if possible, get possession of what seemed to have escaped all memories but her own—the packet No. 3.

With what success remains to be seen.

All that day, with untiring perseverance, Lady Delaunay and her emissaries prosecuted their search, without success. Mr. Powys went to the police-station, in hopes that the fugitive might have been seen, as at the hour of her departure such a figure must have been remarked; and Anderson chased cab after cab, on the reports of the general public, but all to no purpose. Lady Delaunay herself drove or walked till dark, scarcely conscious of fatigue—her anxiety increasing with every failure. Neither at the Home, nor at any of the houses of her acquaintance, had Miss Brittan been seen or heard of, and the Countess began to contemplate seriously the possibility of her having gone abroad. The next morning telegraphs passed down to Dover, Folkestone, and Southampton; but no person answering the description had been seen at any of those places. Mrs. Marsden, sanguine about every new measure, desponded proportionately over every failure. Miss Conway, the better to conceal how great she felt the reprieve, a little overstrained her regret and sympathy. Lady Delaunay, who foresaw she would need all her strength and spirits before she had done, worked very hard, and commented very little. The third morning, she made her appearance early, bringing Charlotte her letters, one with a foreign post-mark; and announcing her immediate departure by the next train.

'Then you have had news?' cried Mrs. Marsden, for Miss Conway was too much absorbed in her foreign letter, short as it was, to find a word in reply.

'I have a clue,' said Lady Delaunay. 'It occurred to Mr. Powys, that she might have followed Miss Unwin, whose present abode he knew to be in a girl's school near Shareham; and he has ascertained that a young lady more or less answering this poor girl's description (for she was not much heeded), took a second-class

ticket to Lilford, the nearest station to Shareham, by the first train the day she was missed. Charlotte !'

Miss Conway looked up from her letter with a palpable start.

'I beg your pardon, my dear ; I did not mean to startle you ; but were you aware from Mr. Randolph—My love, how ill you look ! What is the matter ? Any bad news from Bertram ? Do not keep me in suspense.'

'None, my dear aunt—none at all—only some of his nonsense,' said Miss Conway, trying to smile ; 'he was on the point of leaving Paris when he wrote, and could not say where any letters would find him, and the rest is all *badinage*, that you can see another time. What were you asking me ?'

'If Mr. Randolph mentioned to you having seen Miss Unwin in the country ? It was from him Mr. Powys learnt her address.'

'Never. Is it possible ? Mrs. Marsden, do you hear that ? She has actually gone off to the very person her benefactress had publicly expelled. I give her up. I am sure I have thought of nothing but her behaviour, till if I look pale it is no wonder, for I have a terrible headache ; and I really do think she deserves to be left a little while to bear the consequences of her own madness and indiscretion.'

'I might think the same, my love, were it not, that if left to bear them *now*, she may have to bear them for life. No ; if I can save her, I will ; and I do not think she will stand out against me when she finds I have followed her so far.'

'And *you—you* are going after her, my dear aunt ? Such a piece of condescension on your part ; is it necessary ? It is kind, generous, like yourself—but is it, may I venture to ask, quite consistent with your dignity ?'

'I think it is time that I was trusted to take care of that, my dear,' said Lady Delaunay, smiling gravely.

'But the examination at the Home, Aunt Delaunay—the prizes that were to be given to-morrow, you know ? How sadly disappointed all the poor dear girls will be !'

'I am sorry it should so happen ; Mr. Powys has kindly promised to supply my place ; and he is decidedly in favour of my going. He is quite right,' she added, after a short pause. 'Precious and dear as are the ninety and nine who are safe, we must not weigh them in the balance against the peril of the *one* !'

'That is right, my dear Mary !' said Mrs. Marsden, wiping her eyes. 'God bless you for that merciful word ! but if you only had thought the same a few years sooner, you would have had one sheep now in your fold worth all the rest put together ; yes, you would ! And take my word for it—and not mine only—you will never find a real blessing on anything you do, or have, till you have

brought *that* wanderer home. I have long thought it, though I never ventured to say it before; but if it was the last word I ever spoke to you—as it may be, for all we know—I must clear my conscience, and tell you, Mary, I don't believe the Lord cares half as much for your churches and your schools and your charities, and all your good and clever doings, as He would to see you ready to forget and forgive, and taking that poor widowed thing back to your arms and your heart.'

And quite overcome with the unusual effort of so long and energetic a speech, the kind old lady covered her face with her handkerchief, and hurried out of the room.

Lady Delaunay, who had listened in silence, turned and looked at her niece; and so dark and deeply rooted was the sadness of that look, as to send a thrill of remorse through every nerve of the latter. She flung her arms round the Countess, and groaned in irrepressible agony, as Lady Delaunay kissed her brow, and pressed her to her heart.

'Be composed, my Charlotte; it is hard to bear, but the strength is given with the cross. *You*, at least, do me justice—you whom I have trusted so long, and who have never deceived me; and while I have you and Bertram left, I have no right to repine.'

'Oh, forgive me—forgive me!' murmured Miss Conway, conscience-stricken, and trembling from head to foot; 'I am not deserving of your love; I have not done what I might—if you only knew——'

'My child, if we were all judged by our deservings, who could stand? I know your affectionate heart—that is enough for me. You have done what you could, and may heavenly mercy so deal with *you*, as you have dealt with me—and mine!'

She kissed her again, and hastened into her carriage. Miss Conway made an effort to follow and detain her, but her limbs refused to perform their office, and as the door closed on her aunt, she sank unconscious on the floor.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

The soothing art,  
Which only souls in sufferings tried  
Bear to their suffering brethren's side.—*Kemble*.

'My dear Adelaide,' said Miss Lyndon, entering the room, where she and the two Emmas were in full conclave, 'do you feel equal to a little exertion this fine breezy day?'

It was what most people would have considered a tolerably stiff gale, but it sounded more cheerful to treat it as a breeze.



Lady Adelaide, who had just been planning a quiet little walk with Emma, could not conscientiously avoid an answer in the affirmative.

'Then I will tell you what *we* are going to do, and the nice plan I have made for *you*. Mrs. Grayling has sent to say she is going to drive over to Shareham, and will take Lucy and me, as she knows we have some necessary shopping to do; and as Walter's hair wants cutting dreadfully (he really looks like a wild man in the woods), I shall get her to let him sit on the box. Meanwhile, I do hope you will try and return a few of the calls you owe to all the neighbours. Nothing could exceed their attention while you were ill, and here are all the names down on paper, that you may not omit anybody. Now, do promise me you will clear them off as soon as possible; it is the least you can do, I think—don't you, Emma? She will mind *you*, at any rate.'

'My dear Penelope,' said Adelaide, 'you need appeal to no one. It is enough for me that you wish it; and, as you say, it is the least I can do for all that is done for me.'

'Now, you will make me cross. I don't want to be a tyrant, and drive you into doing what you hate, out of regard for my wishes. I want you to like it yourself, as any reasonable member of society would, and then I need never remind you, and it would be twice as well worth having. Would it not, Emma?'

Emma could not deny the fact.

'To like it?' repeated Lady Adelaide, good-humouredly; 'well, I suppose that taste is to be acquired by perseverance; and if I must, I must. At any rate, Penelope, I will try.'

'Then no one can expect more. After all, you are too good for some of them, there is no denying that, when one sees you all together: but situated as we are, it really would make a vast difference to our peace and comfort, if you could bring yourself to be one of us—instead of looking for all the world like a prisoner on parole, who may not run away, even if he sees a chance.'

Lady Adelaide laughed and coloured: it was so faithful a picture of what she had felt, that she hardly liked to have it placed before her. It was wonderful, however, since she had lowered her arms to Penelope's authority, how much more favourably the latter had begun to regard her; and instead of being jealous of any respect on the part of the neighbours, how inconveniently eager she was becoming to build her up a little popularity. She pressed her to think of anything she could bring her from Shareham; even went so far as to lay a finger on Adelaide's black sleeve, and whisper something about 'a little change'; but this a quiet shake of the head discouraged, and as Emma was superior to all consider-

ations of Shareham shopping, Miss Lyndon was obliged to set off without any commissions.

True to her promise, Lady Adelaide went a round of visits with Emma, and, as she said, tried to like it. If she could not quite succeed, the very effort to do so made her see many things that good sense and feeling could approve, which at other times would have been overlooked in what they were compelled to condemn. How much she was assisted by Emma's pleasant co-operation, she was not quite sure, but it certainly was a very different matter from what it had been : and not to herself only, for though she would have been shocked to be told she had ever failed in politeness, nobody could help perceiving it had assumed a more winning form. Never had her grace and conversational power appeared in Canny-moor to such advantage ; and as each individual became impressed with the belief that it was a flattering exception in her personal favour, her popularity at once shot up to a wonderful height. Indeed, Miss Chatterley, the only one passed over, because nothing would induce Lady Adelaide to set foot in Mr. Spindler's house—heard so much from one and another of the charming things her ladyship had said, looked, and implied on that memorable afternoon, that she was nearly driven mad with irritation and excitement ; and so gusty a reception was prepared for Abel on his return, as made Miss Lyndon's cheerful breeze seem in comparison a zephyr.

When all was done that duty demanded, Emma would have persuaded her companion to go home and rest ; but the rectory gate was open, and Sophy standing at it, and her urgent entreaties for a visit prevailed. The rector met them with cordial welcome at the door, and Colly, with a clean apron tied on in such a hurry that it hung behind instead of before, loomed indistinctly in the background, curtsying blithely, her face all one grin with pleasure to see my lady about again. Here, at any rate, Emma saw that Adelaide was a favourite ; and if she would only have acknowledged hunger or thirst, so as to afford an excuse for emptying their larder before her, they would have been quite happy. As it was, Sophy was in a rapture of unexpected bliss in being allowed to draw a stool close to her knee, and sit looking up in her face, showing her the beautiful walnut-wood workbox, with gilt clamps, sent to her all the way from London by Mr. Randolph, with a kind note, telling her it was in return for her industry in working for little Betsy Smith—and having her breath nearly taken away by hearing herself mentioned to Mrs. Henry Lyndon as 'my little confidential friend and ally.'

Emma really enjoyed this visit. Dr. Home was so hearty and kind, Lady Adelaide so agreeable, the little sitting-room, with all

its homeliness, so bright and cheerful, that the time slipped away only too fast ; and what was only to have been ten minutes, became nearly an hour before they thought about it at all. The ladies were just beginning to talk of going home, when Colly (her apron in the right place this time) appeared to say, as she so often did, that there was a body to speak with the master. Dr. Home went out, and soon returned, looking serious.

‘Your poor pensioner has taken a turn for the worse, Lady Adelaide, and I must go to her directly ; but I find she has been expressing extreme desire to see you once more. Are you equal to another visit ?’

Lady Adelaide rose instantly, silencing the dissent she read, or thought she read, in Emma’s eyes.

‘I am quite well and strong now ; and if I were not, I could not hesitate in such a case. Now, my dear Emma, pray be quiet. It is too absurd to give a whole afternoon to people who do not care to see me, and scruple about half an hour to one who *does*.’

‘I am not aware that I have said anything about it,’ said Emma.

‘No : but you looked, as only nurses can ; and I assure you—Dr. Home, do persuade this dear anxious guardian that I am to be trusted to my own care—and yours !’

To the Doctor’s care, at any rate, as nothing else was available, Emma was fain to commit her ; for her own duties recalled her to the Manorhouse ; but notwithstanding all their protestations, her mind misgave her when they parted, to see the vigorous manner in which the old gentleman, accustomed to use all possible despatch on these occasions, tucked his fair companion’s arm in his, and marched her off, double quick time, in the teeth of the gale. To own the truth, it was not long before the misgiving was shared by the object of it ; she was not quite so robust as she had boasted herself ; and by the time she reached the cottage, her breath and energy were so well-nigh spent, that Sergeant Wade looked quite dismayed as he opened the door.

‘They told me you were getting well,’ he said, resentfully, ‘or I wouldn’t have allowed you to be sent for. You shall not go up till you have rested, I can tell you that. You just go in there.’

And before she could offer an objection, he put her into his room, and into his wooden arm-chair, while he opened a cupboard, took out a bottle and glass, and poured out some port wine.

‘You just drink that, my lady.’

She remonstrated ; he stamped on the floor as imperatively as if they had been on drill. ‘Drink it this minute, I say. You needn’t be afraid, for though it has been in a poor man’s cupboard, it comes from a gentleman’s cellar. Mr. Randolph left it with me afore he went—and he is a real gentleman, if ever there was one.’

'You must drink it, Lady Adelaide,' put in Dr. Home, quickly ; 'the sergeant is quite right, and you are not strong enough to resist us both, so do not put us to it.'

Sergeant Wade touched his forehead to the rector, with a grim smile, and Lady Adelaide, very much against her will, was compelled to swallow Mr. Randolph's wine ; the two old men standing guard over her the while, to enforce obedience if she resisted. They nodded to each other with much satisfaction as she set down the glass.

'Thank you, sergeant,' said the rector. 'The secular arm is the better guardian of the two. I am not fit to be trusted with anything so delicate ; but Lady Adelaide is one of those who will go till she drops, and I should never have known she was knocked up till it was too late. Now about the poor thing up-stairs. Can we go up ?'

The old man looked sternly at Lady Adelaide's face before answering, as if to make sure she was sufficiently recruited ; then deliberately locked up his precious bottle before he went to see. They heard him mount the little steep staircase, and ask in a low voice if they were ready for her ladyship and the parson ; and then he came back, pointing to them to ascend.

'It's little either of you can do for her now,' he murmured, in his deep, desponding tones ; 'she only knows one by fits and starts, and then she is off rambling, or stupid like. If you want *Him* to hear you on her account, you must look sharp about your asking.'

'We hope that He has heard us already,' said Dr. Home, as, forgetting politeness in anxiety, he passed up the staircase before his companion. 'It is not our way to put these things off till the last minute.'

Lady Adelaide turned when about to follow, and laid her hand on the soldier's arm with a gesture of entreaty. He read its meaning, and drew back with a shake of the head.

'No, no, my lady ; it is no work for me. The parson may be a saint, as you are an angel ; but I am neither one nor the other ; and if there is any mercy coming on *your* account, it would be sure to stop halfway on *mine*.'

'I obeyed you just now, sergeant ; it is your turn to obey me. Come !'

Her face subdued him, as it had done often before, and he followed, just in time to hear the rector, as he entered the sick chamber, pronounce the blessing, 'Peace be to this house, and to all that are in it.'

It was, indeed, but too evident that there was not much left for human kindness or Church ordinances to do. The lamp was

sinking fast in the socket, and it was only at intervals that the sunken eyes lighted up with sufficient intelligence to recognize the faces round her. One of these gleams appeared as Lady Adelaide approached the bed, and the wasted hands made a feeble effort to clasp hers, as she murmured, 'That face was my first comfort—yes, and it will be my last.'

'Not your last,' said Lady Adelaide, earnestly. 'Dr. Home is here—he can give you better still. Can you listen to him?'

She hardly seemed to hear; her eyes were fixed on the countenance bending over her pillow, and there was a grateful love in their gaze that made them beautiful. She tried to speak, but the words came out slowly, and in gasps.

'You saved me—you sheltered me—you clothed me and my little one—I can't reward you, but He will. Thank you for all—and the good gentleman—and his reverence the Doctor—and the sergeant—you have all been too good to such a poor creature.' And with an effort, she turned her head towards the old rector. 'May each one of you have the prayer of your heart given you, in return for all you have done for me. God bless you all four!'

No one answered; the three who heard were too much touched to speak; the tears not only stood in Lady Adelaide's eyes, but glistened in those of the old clergyman, and moistened the withered lids of old Wade, wondering and half angry at his own weakness. After a few moments' silence, Dr. Home gave notice that he was going to pray. The stupor seemed to be fast creeping again over the senses of the sufferer; but several times her pale lips moved in the effort to follow the words of supplication, and her fingers remained clasped on the hand of Lady Adelaide, kneeling by her bed—as if her very touch gave her comfort and hope. The sergeant stood at first irresolute; but Dr. Home's impressive reading and Lady Adelaide's example, overcame him, he hardly knew how or why; and to the surprise of the old nurse, who looked upon him as nothing short of a heathen, he put one knee to the ground for the first time perhaps during many years—and listened even if he did not join; the little girl, who had run to him on his entrance, crouching in vague terror by his side.

The prayer was just ended—each head was still bowed, and the heavy eyes of the sufferer had closed again, when a sound below as of some vehicle stopping at the gate, and then as if some one was endeavouring to gain admission, made them all rise, and look at each other in wondering conjecture. The sergeant went quietly down to see who was come; Dr. Home made a sign to the nurse, who came to the other side of the bed, and forced some wine between the frothy lips. The woman reopened her eyes, and a strange expression came over her face. She looked at Lady

Adelaide Lyndon, struggling to whisper something she could not utter. The lady bent her ear to her lips, and made out at last the words—'mother—pardon—too late.'

'No, no,' she replied, in a low tone of deep emotion, 'it is never too late while life remains. God permits us to hope to the last, or our hearts would break. He may yet have reserved this mercy to cheer you on your journey home!'

The sunken eyes dilated as she spoke, and then became fixed and rigid. Lady Adelaide had raised herself from her bending posture, and another form had become visible in the doorway—that of a respectable elderly woman in a close white cap and black bonnet, who came forward in agitation, not to be mistaken, ejaculating in broken accents, 'My Nanny!—my poor lost one!—'and folding her arms round her daughter, murmured blessings on herself, and thanks to God for His mercy.

The rector and his companion drew involuntarily back, contemplating the scene with feelings of deep sympathy. They saw the wasted arms twine round the mother's neck—they saw the eyes radiant with the renewed light of satisfied love—they heard her faint, gasping confession and entreaty, cut short by kisses and assurances—and then there came that sudden stillness that is like nothing else in the world, broken by an exceeding bitter cry, as the mother shrieked for help. The nurse, Lady Adelaide, and Dr. Home were round them in a moment, but their misgivings were but too surely realized. That gentle physic, given in time, might have prolonged her days; but coming when it did, proved too powerful for the sinking frame, and in the very act she had pined for so long, she had expired without a struggle.

The scene that followed, it is not our purpose to describe. It was one of those, which foreknown, would be pronounced impossible for human nature to bear, without shaking reason from its seat. Those who witnessed were wrung to the heart; but who could measure the anguish of her who endured!

An hour later, Dr. Home, who had been visiting another sick parishioner across the moor, came back to fetch Lady Adelaide, and found her so worn out, he had great doubts as to how she was to walk home. It was no wonder she should be, after the terrible scene she had gone through in attempting to calm the stricken mother—besides soothing the frightened child, and superintending, with womanly reverence, the last offices to the poor body, for which she at least, had done what she could; but not the less was her old friend disposed to scold himself, and her, and everybody else, for the risk she had been allowed to run. There was nothing for it, however, as they agreed, but to set out and do their best, as soon as they had taken leave of the old sergeant. Him they found

sitting by his empty grate, in a desolate attitude—his head sunk on his broad chest, and his hands clenched on his knees. He hardly looked up when they spoke, but groaned as if from the very bottom of his heart.

‘Come, sergeant,’ said the rector, kindly, ‘you at least have the comfort of knowing, that when others shut their doors against our poor wandering sister, you set yours open. Her Father, and ours, my friend, will not forget that, nor shall we.’

‘Sir,’ said the old man, slowly raising his head, ‘I believe you mean kindly, and so I thank you. I believe, too, that you are in earnest in what you say, and so I ask your pardon if I have not been always as civil as you’d a right to expect. But don’t waste your time upon me; it is of no use. As to *Him* you speak of, thinking aught of my letting that poor body use my room because my lady wished it, that sounds all very well, but it won’t go down. *He* knows me too well, if *you* don’t, to take much notice of what I do, or leave undone.’

‘Brother!’ said the old rector, laying his hand on his shoulder, ‘brother!—like me, near the gate of the next world—is *that* your idea of a parent’s love? Can you try to persuade even yourself that it *is*, with that poor creature sobbing over her lost one within your own walls—feeling that all she has in the world she would give, and gladly, but to call back the breath into that cold body, which she left—no matter why—to the mercy of the still colder world? Think you that God’s love is less than woman’s, when you know, as well as I do, *who* it was that said, “Yea, they *may* forget yet will I not forget thee?” I will not hear *Him* so wronged. I tell you in *His* name, that there is a home reserved for you, with *His* other rebellious children whom *His* patient mercy has won back from ruin and despair; and *He* whose pity followed that lost sheep now resting in *His* bosom, through all her weary wanderings—*He* it is who will say to you, if you will but turn to *Him* while it is called to-day, “Inasmuch as thou didst it to one of the least of these, thou didst it unto *Me*!”

The old soldier’s features relaxed. He rose respectfully, and bowed his head, with a heavy sigh, in which there was something more like hope. It was one point gained at least, that he did not sternly reject the offered consolation, and Dr. Home was content to let it work. So with a kind farewell they were just setting out when to their surprise there rode up to the gate no less a personage than Mr. Ousel. Directly he saw them, he threw himself gracefully from the saddle, and with a low bow apologized for the liberty he seemed to be taking. It was at Mr. Lyndon’s request; who, on reaching home after their ride, had grown anxious on Lady Adelaide’s account.

'We have been riding together,' he explained, hastily, seeing her surprise increase rather than diminish! 'perhaps you were not aware that our friend, Mr. Randolph, left his horse at the Squire's disposal; and begged me, as the best service I could do himself and the animal, to persuade him, if possible, to use it; which to-day I was fortunate enough to do; and a charming ride we had; and as I was—ahem!—coming this way, he honoured me with the commission—for which I again entreat her pardon—of hastening Lady Adelaide's return.'

Lady Adelaide was too tired to do more than bow, not at all pleased in her heart with his officiousness; but Dr. Home whose penetration was sharper than hers, saw the embarrassment veiled by the assumed suavity of the young man's demeanour, and that there was some reason for this strange step.

'If you had brought a side-saddle with you, it would have been rather more to the purpose,' he said, bluntly. 'This lady is quite knocked up, and it is no use talking of hurrying her home, unless you can give her a lift.'

'If I only could!' exclaimed Mr. Ousel, glancing at Lady Adelaide's pale face; 'but cannot it be done, even now? My cloak is here, at her service—too honoured by her use; the horse is as gentle as a lamb. I would lead him myself, to insure her safety, if she would deign to trust herself—'

'Do, my dear friend, in pity to me,' urged the rector, stopping Lady Adelaide's polite refusal; 'I shall never forgive myself if you are ill again; and surely you are too sensible a woman to be cowardly about nothing?'

She smiled at the imputation on her courage, considering that she had learned to ride, with or without a saddle, from as early a period as her memory would reach; and, sooner than disoblige him, she yielded reluctantly to the proposal. Joyfully did Mr. Ousel unbuckle his cloak, and spread it over the saddle; and intense was his emotion of happiness when she laid her hand on his shoulder, and sprang lightly into her seat, allowing him to wrap the thick folds carefully round her, and thanking him with the sweetest smile he had ever seen in his life. As she moved from the gate, Dr. Home beckoned him back, and they exchanged a few words; and then the rector came up in a hurried manner to wish her good-bye. He had business elsewhere—he would leave Ousel to see her safe home. Before she could utter a word in reply, he turned abruptly away; and Mr. Ousel taking her bridle, led her on towards the Manorhouse.

Common courtesy and gratitude required her to be gracious to her escort; and though she would gladly have been silent, she endeavoured to keep up some kind of conversation—rather difficult



at first, from his embarrassment and shyness ; but when once her gentle ease of manner had given him confidence, he was only too ready and eager to prolong the interview. He was led into a confession of a great work he had on hand, which had as yet been confided to *one* friend only—a work that would—*must*—immortalize his name, and usher in a new musical era ; and if it might be permitted to bear her name inscribed on the title-page, as a lowly tribute of the profoundest veneration, the honour would even outshine the fame. She took this dazzling request rather too serenely, but with perfect politeness, and his courage rose with every step. He could not resist the temptation of compelling the horse to walk as slowly as possible, and Lady Adelaide began to express her regret at giving him so much trouble, and adding to his fatigue after his ride.

‘Yes, I *have* had a long ride ; no matter, I am not tired. I should not be, were I——Do you know, Lady Adelaide, what I am wishing at this moment ?’

She could not imagine, and felt too weary to guess.

‘I wish,’ he went on, in his deepest monotone, ‘that the road before us were but the road of life, and that I might have no higher lot in store than to walk at your bridle-rein till I died.’

As this wish sounded unreasonable, not to say insane, and was certainly not reciprocated, Lady Adelaide would not seem to notice it, and made some civil remark on the work he had yet to finish.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘there is much for me to do ; but it is the lot of those whose organization is more subtle than others, to give way the first. Mozart wrote his own Requiem—the divine Mendelssohn died young. What then ? Let us but live in the memory we prize most, and in the tears of those eyes that were our inspiration, and what does it matter ?’

What, indeed ? But as it would not quite do to say so, Lady Adelaide was just revolving what well-bred disheartening remark would be most appropriate, when he leaned his arm on the horse’s neck, and looked up in her face, very earnestly and gravely.

‘May I speak to you, madam, for a moment ?’

‘Certainly, sir,’ said Lady Adelaide, not seeing her way clear to avoid it, especially as he had been speaking already without permission ; but not half liking her predicament, nor the expression of his eyes.

‘It may seem inopportune, selfish, inconsiderate ; but I have so seldom this happiness, and changes occur so suddenly—you yourself, ere to-morrow’s sun, may have seen and suffered change—that the emergency must plead for me. But, first, do you know, Lady Adelaide Lyndon, that you have an enemy ?’

Lady Adelaide was silent, perhaps with astonishment.

‘You will not commit yourself—perhaps you are right ; but—do not ask me how—we have ways and means of intelligence that the world wots not of, or how should we be what we are ? I know who and what he is—what he has dared to aim at, and what means he has dared to use. And I know who it was that baffled him, and that there is another ready to baffle him again. I entreat your patience——’ for she had jerked the bridle in so imperative a manner, that the horse quickened his pace, and the gentleman had rather a scramble to regain his position. ‘I name this but to warn you. Abel Spindler never loses sight of an object, and when you seem to be safest, is his most dangerous time. He has two objects now in view—the Manorhouse and your illustrious self. You may think both equally secure *now* ; but should you find that he is too strong and too artful for you, as virtue and excellence have found ere now, remember you have at least *one* devoted friend at hand, who can—who will—help you. Promise me, that in such an extremity you will call upon me !’

He waited for an answer, but as none seemed forthcoming—she was, in truth, too vexed and confounded to make any—he resumed, in softer accents, ‘Enough that you are warned. If my fears are never realized—though, in minds like ours, presentiments are too often prophetic warnings—you have but to forget I ever spoke ; if they *are*, and I can have the happiness of doing you a service, the thought that you will cherish a kind remembrance of me hereafter, will be the sweetest flower on my grave.’

The incongruity of a man with nothing in the world the matter with him, talking of his grave in this sentimental way, compared with the reality she had just been witnessing, jarred so gratingly on Lady Adelaide’s taste, that, tired as she was, she felt, if she spoke at all, she must either laugh or cry ; and hardly knew which would be the worst. It was annoyance enough to find that Mr. Spindler’s persecution was known to anybody ; but the vague intimation of further designs affected her but little. She was safe for the present ; no matter how ; and soon she trusted to be beyond his reach. There was no call, therefore, for any vehement gratitude on her part towards her would-be and much too inquisitive champion—whether he lived or died—which at that moment did not seem to her of that importance it was to him. Fearing at last her silence might be misconstrued, she compelled herself to reply in general terms of acknowledgment for good intention ; and trusted to his discernment to take a hint.

He was much disconcerted by this method of proceeding. If she would but have shown some degree of agitation, of curiosity, or even of anger, it would have been a relief from this terrible aristocratic politeness, whose quiet ease only served to make his

own embarrassment more painfully visible. The moments were slipping away—the opportunity might never return, and he had said nothing yet that he most wished to say. From force of habit, as he walked on, he began to murmur the song he had made his own; and before he recollected himself, had fairly gone through, in his softest cadence, a verse of the far-famed *Adelaide*. He suddenly remembered—looked up, began to stammer an apology—met the grave surprise of her eye, and in the consciousness of having committed himself, waxed desperate and courageous.

‘No, why should I deceive you?—Music is the outpouring of my spirit, and in it I can only be true. So it is—go where I may, try as I will, everywhere and in everything, “*Strahlt dein Anlitz, Adelaide!*” and if I offend you in telling you so—if it is presumption to love unto idolatry perfections that are to be rivalled by none—visit me with your anger, your contempt, if you will, but you cannot eradicate the evil. You may crush my spirit, blight my genius, break my heart, and feel that I deserve it all—but you cannot prevent me, even then, from worshipping and admiring you to the last!’

‘Hush, sir, I beg—I entreat,’ interposed Lady Adelaide. She could not say she did not think him presumptuous, for she did, and that to the highest degree; but she was too sorry for him, and perhaps too thoroughly tired out, to show resentment. Certainly, either Cannymoor itself must be going mad, or had formed a combination to drive her so. Much as she pitied her unfortunate admirer—for theatrical as might be his outbreak of devotion, there was no mistaking its reality—it was very difficult to answer him seriously and with patience. Nevertheless, she made the attempt, and annihilated him as gently as she could, refraining with more care than she might have used a few months sooner, from any word or gesture that could wound his pride, or give scope to her own. And then came an expressive silence between them, and she thought they should never get home.

Home was reached at last, however. As they came to the front of the house, Mr. Wylde’s gig was waiting at the door, and a post-chaise standing a little in front. Arrivals were so rare at the Manorhouse, her first idea was that Henry must be come; and with an exclamation of relief she was hastening on, when Mr. Ousel stopped her short.

‘One word, first, Lady Adelaide! I ought to—I meant—pray wait one minute, only one!’

But she would not be detained; she had no intention of listening; she sprang lightly to the ground before he could prevent her, returned him due thanks for his politeness, and was sure Mr. Lyndon would be happy to see him if he would walk in.

‘Me? no, impossible at this moment; but, oh, Lady Adelaide, if you only knew——’

She knew quite enough for the present, at any rate, to make her break from him in haste; but as she turned at the door to give him a farewell bow, he saw a sudden change pass over her face, that made his heart, less selfish at that moment than she had supposed, beat quick with fear and sympathy. A servant was standing in the hall, as she entered, whose face she had not seen for years, but knew only too well. She sprang forwards with a shriek, calling him by his name. ‘Anderson, Anderson! what is it? What has happened?’

Anderson turned, looked full at her for a moment, and then bowed low—almost to the ground.

‘There has been a slight accident, my lady; and her ladyship has been brought *here*.’

## CHAPTER XXV

Mein Alles hängt, mein Leben, mein Geschick,  
Auf meinen Worten, meinen Thränen Kraft—  
Lös't mir das Herz, dass ich das Eure rühre!—*Schiller*.

THE train by which Lady Delaunay went down to Lilford, was delayed, and she did not arrive till an hour later than she had expected. There happened to be an unusual demand for post-horses, and none seemed to be forthcoming; but it was not the first time, by many, that mistress and servant had taken these private journeys of mercy; and while Mr. Anderson was negotiating for a conveyance, Lady Delaunay was prosecuting inquiries among policemen, porters, and attendants, but without success. So many travellers came backwards and forwards, it was hardly possible to distinguish individuals, unless they particularly attracted attention. The trail, in fact, was lost; and she was debating whether a day should not be given up to a systematic search through the town, when Anderson came back at last with a face full of discovery. He had found a return chaise from Shareham, and the loquacious communications of the driver—our old acquaintance Bob of the George—had decided him on securing it at once. Bob had seen a young lady answering the description of Miss Brittan; for why? did he not find her maundering about the platform, all dazed like, here at Lilford, where he had just set down a wedding party, and didn't he ask her where she wanted to go—and didn't he, Bob, in this very individual chaise, take her his own self to Shareham? To be sure he did; and a pretty, free-spoken young lady she was, and to his thinking, rather too young and too pretty to go larking about the country all by herself, and he made bold to tell her as much; and she cried, and said

she had a friend to go to, if she could only find a quiet lodging first to rest herself and think what she had best do; so he told her his mother was as honest a body as ever scrubbed shirt-collar, seeing as how she took in washing by the piece or the dozen; and she had a room to let, and if she pleased, there she might go—and there she went. Oh, he knew nothing more, how should he? He only seed the old woman once a week, when she brought him his clean things for Sunday; for why?—he had his business to mind, and she hers, in course.

To his mother's, therefore, Lady Delaunay resolved to go. It took some time to get to Shareham, and when there, to find the washerwoman after they had found her house. Her evidence was not extensive. Yes, the young lady slept there one night, and a poor helpless young thing she seemed, as far as she could see, and cried if one looked at her; and when she had paid for everything, there was so little left in her purse, that she couldn't afford to send for Bob's chaise, or a fly, or nothing; but was glad to have a lift as far as Ugglestone in Farmer Drake's market cart, that was going that way—to the school they called the College—though what that meant she couldn't exactly say. He took her and her traps, and that was all she knew.

It had now grown so late in the afternoon, that Lady Delaunay thought she had better rest at the inn, and resume her search next day. She was prepared for such an emergency, and was much too independent to feel the absence of her maid. She spent that night at the George, and Bob and his chaise were engaged to take her next day to the College.

Unwilling to cause any excitement by arriving at such an establishment at an unseasonable hour, she did not start early, and the drive was through such very bad roads, that it was more fatiguing than the journey of the day before. It was two o'clock before she drove up to the walled enclosure that fenced the College from the uneducated world. On sending in her card, with a request to speak with the 'Principal,' as the head of the establishment styled herself, she was ushered into a freezing drawing-room, and left to amuse herself with a vase of artificial flowers, several stiff, painfully finished drawings in gaudy frames, four albums laid formally at even distances round the table, and a pair of screens of wonderfully conceived birds and butterflies—an exciting school of High Art that she had ample leisure to appreciate; for the Principal, though held by the farmers' wives and good people of Shareham a model of manners, etiquette, and fashion, did not feel equal to the task of receiving a real live Countess, in her every-day costume; and one's best gown and cap, even at a College, are not things to be put on in a hurry. At last, however, she made her appearance;

and her long-drawn curtsey of welcome and apology was well-nigh brought to an abrupt conclusion, by the shock of seeing the magnificent visitor she had seen in her mind's eye, transformed into a plain little figure in black, with bright eyes and white hair, and a quiet manner so much too easy to be grand. Her disappointment was so palpable, Lady Delaunay could not but have observed it, had she not been too anxious for observation; and as soon as possible, she cut short the somewhat confused speech of the Principal, by inquiring for Miss Brittan. At first the lady denied she had been there at all; but on hearing her description, supposed her ladyship must mean a young person who came to see Miss Unwin a day or two ago, giving her name as Jones; and who applied for the situation of teacher, offering her services for her board. Of course, without a recommendation, such a thing could not be thought of, and Miss Unwin could give her none—indeed, pronounced her to be a silly, flighty girl, very badly brought up.

‘Then what became of her, madam?’

‘Really, Lady Delaunay, I cannot say. Had I been aware—but I did not consider myself justified in retaining her—neither had I authority to direct her movements. She left this house, as I supposed, to return to her friends.’

‘May I request the favour of a few minutes’ private conversation with Miss Unwin?’

‘Certainly, Lady Delaunay; whatever your ladyship pleases, I shall be most happy, I am sure. Your ladyship will appreciate’—the Principal had now recovered her presence of mind, and her elegance of demeanour—‘the caution I have been compelled to use. The care of young persons, Lady Delaunay, is so responsible, so important a charge—and in this establishment, I can conscientiously assure your ladyship, *every* care, *every* precaution is taken, that parents or guardians could practise, or suggest. If I might be so honoured as to have your ladyship’s recommendation, or if the liberty were permitted of laying the Prospectus and Rules of the College before you——’ Here she pressed a packet of voluminous-looking documents upon Lady Delaunay, and then glided off into a lengthy dissertation on the merits and reminiscences of the institution—to which the Countess listened with the polite resignation she had acquired by long acquaintance with the world, well aware that to interrupt would only be to prolong the matter. In due time, her patience was rewarded, as the Principal, having no more to say, rang the bell, and despatched a peremptory message for Miss Unwin.

Miss Unwin had no elaborate toilette to delay her, and soon appeared; glad enough to leave the French grammar she had been hammering into the heads of half-a-dozen young Britons, with

about as much success as if they had been of granite. Her face, already flushed with the close school-room, and exertion of tuition, grew scarlet at the sight of Lady Delaunay, who rose as she entered, and greeted her gravely and politely as she would have done a stranger. The Principal introduced her with due form, assured her ladyship that she had every confidence in her abilities and judgment, and then curtsied herself out of the presence.

The momentary confusion visible in the young lady's face, passed away when she found herself alone with her former benefactress, and was succeeded by an expression of dogged, almost insolent defiance. She had brooded over her late disgrace, till all grateful memory of past kindness was buried in the sense of wrong; and desperate of ever regaining the Countess's esteem, there was some relief in giving her as much vexation and anxiety as possible. So she met her inquiries with a mocking smile, and affected surprise that she should trouble herself about any one who had committed 'the unpardonable offence'—as she understood it to be; and as it was evident Miss Brittan thought it, by her not waiting to be turned out. Her ladyship must excuse her—however much to blame, she could not betray a friend in misfortune.

'I trust indeed that you have not the heart,' said Lady Delaunay, earnestly. 'It would be adding injury to injury, if you betray her unsuspecting confidence so far as to hide her from her friends.'

'Pray, madam, what injury have I ever done her? It is no fault of mine that you have made her afraid of you. They are all afraid of you—every one of them. Did you really suppose all the rules and regulations and arrangements you made and enforced, were so very pleasant to all those girls, that they would not have rebelled if they dared? I wish you had been behind the scenes now and then, and had seen some of your dear obedient children when they thought your back was turned. You fancy they all adore you, and receive all your dogmas as inspired; but young minds *will* think for themselves, and it is quite time you knew it.'

Lady Delaunay's colour changed slightly, but the glance that rested on the speaker was full of much deeper compassion than when she had seen her wildest paroxysms of repentance. That calm reproachful eye woke up the half-stifled shame within, so fiercely suppressed; in spite of herself, Miss Unwin felt the influence of her presence, and the sinking of her heart warned her she must either strike harder yet—or succumb.

'What injury have I done Miss Brittan, I ask you again, Lady Delaunay? She was your own peculiar charge—brought up under your own eye, not to have an opinion of her own, or to read a single book that had not passed under the scissors of your censorship. She was to have turned out a pattern and a model to us all

And if she has been, unluckily for the credit of the system, in the habit of deceiving you every day, reading forbidden works on the sly (the very way to make the worst trash captivating), inventing excuses to throw you off the scent, listening at doors, peeping into letters, and telling or acting untruths—I only repeat her own confession—well! who is to blame? Not I, certainly, who have had no intercourse with her beyond one or two letters—I was not her guardian and friend, seeing her at all times, teaching her how best to take you in, and letting you see nothing but through the mist she raised—not I.’

Lady Delaunay trembled visibly, as if a sudden chill had struck upon both body and mind. ‘You assure me on your sacred honour, Isabel Unwin, that you have had nothing to do with all this?’

‘On as much of my honour as you think worth appealing to. You took care to let me carry away as little self-respect from your institution as you could; but I have too much left to wish any other to follow my example, and if I had had the opportunity, I never had the inclination.’

‘Prove this to me by telling me where I may find this imprudent child.’

‘Indeed, you must excuse me. I only know she came in a farmer’s cart, and I think she got into it again when she left this house. She was only here a short time, and he was waiting on business. But perhaps,’ her eye kindled with malice, and her colour rose high, ‘perhaps if your ladyship did not mind the trouble, there is a lady in the neighbourhood, who, if all we hear be true, is not at all unlikely to know something of such an imprudent runaway.’

‘Indeed! who is she, and where does she live?’

‘She lives, I believe, not very far off, at Cannymoor Manor-house. Her name is Lady Adelaide Lyndon.’

Lady Delaunay’s eye flashed; her look and gesture were those of a monarch incensed. ‘Go!’ was all she said, but it was enough for her antagonist, who obeyed precipitately; satisfied to have raised the storm, but not caring to stay and brave it. With a brief adieu, and apology to the Principal, Lady Delaunay then departed also—in quest of Mr. Drake’s farm.

Dispirited and fatigued, she was paying little attention to her route, when descending a steep, broken pitch, some of the harness giving way, the horses took fright, and in spite of the driver’s exertions, rushed round a sharp corner, and overturned the carriage down a bank, just as Mr. Lyndon and Mr. Ousel rode up to the spot. Finding an elderly lady evidently much hurt, and hardly conscious, the Squire, with his favourite *grand seigneur* air, desired she might be conveyed at once to the Manorhouse, as there was no



other gentleman's residence within reach. It was not till the battered carriage had been raised and patched up with the help of some passing labourers, so as to move on at the slow pace rendered necessary by the condition of the inmate, that Mr. Lyndon learned the name of his guest. There was no time for debate; it was speedily settled between the gentlemen, that while the elder rode with the carriage to render any assistance that might be required, the younger should gallop on to give notice at the Manorhouse, and then to summon Mr. Wylde.

By this means, Emma, the only one at home, was the first to hear *who* was approaching to claim her care and attention. Whatever she felt, she had no time to stay and think about it; at whatever risk of giving offence, she was obliged to take the responsibility of the necessary arrangements; and by sacrificing her own and the baby's rooms, over which she might be considered to have some lawful control, she trusted to do so with as little inconvenience to the others as possible. There was space for them in Adelaide's domain, who was sure to be satisfied, let her do what she might. By dint of much persuading and stimulating of the puzzled servants, everything was prepared by the time Mr. Lyndon arrived with his charge. The wonderful state of that gentleman's mind when he did arrive, and found only his niece, and the excited and contradictory orders he poured forth to every servant and individual within reach, very nearly took away Emma's presence of mind, memory, and breath, just when they were all most needed. Happily, his wife, who had been roused suddenly from her afternoon doze, with a vague impression that something wrong was going on, soon absorbed his attention by a fit of childish terror, that only his presence could soothe; and when once relieved from his commands, warnings, and advice, Mrs. Henry Lyndon speedily recovered the use of her faculties. With Mr. Anderson's assistance, invaluable from his strength, and still more from his coolness, which neither the bruises of his body nor the distress of his mind could disturb—the Countess was conveyed to her room; and recovered herself during the operation sufficiently to ask where she was. On receiving Anderson's prompt reply, 'At Cannymoor Manorhouse, my lady,' her eyes closed again, and they heard her murmur as if unconsciously, 'Fate—fate—or Thy hand? which—and why?' and then no more passed till she was left alone with Emma.

It was some time even then before she found strength and resolution to speak; Emma watched the contracting muscles and quivering lips in no small anxiety, uncertain whether the suffering was from bodily pain, or mental disquietude, and longing for the arrival of Mr. Wylde. At last Lady Delaunay raised her heavy eyelids, and looked wistfully in her young nurse's face.

‘Did I understand rightly that I am in Mr. Lyndon’s house?’

‘Yes, madam,’ said Emma, with a beating heart, wondering what would come next.

‘How did I come here?’

‘I believe my uncle saw the accident, and thought your ladyship would be more comfortable than at a farm—so he ventured——’

‘You are Mr. Lyndon’s niece?’

‘By marriage, madam.’

The Countess paused for breath, but kept her eyes on the fair young face, that burned hotter visibly beneath them.

‘I have fallen into gentle and friendly hands,’ she resumed, presently, with increased difficulty, yet as if there was something she must say, at whatever cost. ‘I may give you all sad trouble, and yet can only thankfully accept your kindness. May I beg one favour?’ Her cheeks grew more ghastly, and her voice sank to a whisper. ‘I am, as you see, much shaken, and at my age, there is no strength to spare. Do not let me be taken by surprise—I shall die if you do.’

‘Dear madam, rest perfectly easy; no one will attempt it. No one will even enter your room without your permission.’

‘Thank you; that is a distinct promise, and I confide in it, and in *you*.’

She smiled faintly as she said this, and relapsed into the stillness of exhaustion and pain.

Such good speed had Mr. Ousel made, and so expeditious was Mr. Wylde when he heard the quality of his new patient, that he was at the Manorhouse before he would have believed it possible for a commoner, and eased Emma of the burden of responsibility. Lady Delaunay had requested to speak with him alone, and it was while Mrs. Henry Lyndon was waiting and listening in the passage, that she caught the sound she had been nervously and yet longingly expecting—Adelaide’s half-stifled shriek in the hall, and then her flying step on the stairs. She rushed to meet her half-way, and caught her in her arms, answering, as fast as she could, the questions the daughter’s eyes were asking, but which her white lips could not frame.

‘Courage, courage!’ she whispered, as they moved along the gallery towards the door of the bedroom, and she felt Adelaide’s convulsive trembling grow wilder at every step; ‘we have every reason to hope and believe that she is not seriously hurt—only requires care—and when once, with God’s blessing, we have her well again, it will go very hard with us if we do not get her to hear a little reason afterwards. She is *here*; repeat that to yourself over and over again; no one can hinder your meeting, if you have only patience and courage; and you have shown so much already, they will not begin to fail you *now*.’

Adelaide seemed neither to hear nor heed.

'Emma, Emma—I must see her, if only for a moment I *must*.'

'And so you will, I hope, soon—directly she gives permission. I promised that no one should disturb her without it.'

'You promised to keep me out of my mother's room—you, Emma? Do you think you *can*?'

'With your assistance—yes,' said Emma, gently; 'for I have only to remind you that she forbids it, and you are the last who would dare to disobey.'

'*Dare?*' repeated Adelaide, in a hoarse whisper, while her eyes flashed menacingly; 'that is a word of which such as you know nothing. What *you* would not dare to look at, I have *done*; what would horrify you to hear of in fiction, I have lived among, and lived through—and still I live! Do not tell me of what I dare not do; there is no human power or authority that has a shadow of right to stand between me and her—nor *shall*!'

The colour faded in Emma's cheek, and the tears rose to her eyes. She stood silent; too full of pity to be resentful.

'Long, too long,' continued Adelaide, still with the same low, fierce rapidity, 'have whisperers and would-be mediators kept her from me—mocking me with promises and smooth words—always going to explain and persuade, and never, never allowing me one moment to speak for myself. Now, at last, my time is come—now she is mine, and mine only, and let me see who will venture to bar my way!'

'Hush!' said Emma, suddenly; 'listen!'

They held their breath for a moment; and there stole through the closed door a low moan or pain, as if wrung from reluctant lips, that blanched the daughter's flushed cheek, and dimmed the fire of her eyes. Alas! how often and how long had she prayed to hear that voice, even though it might be in anger—and now that she heard it in the faint moan of suffering, was she going to disobey its first command? Selfish as she was, to think only of herself and her grief at such a time! Was this her repentance—this her gratitude? She turned to Emma, with an imploring gesture of contrition. 'Forgive me—you are right and I am wrong. I will be patient—I will obey her. God in His mercy only raise her up—and give me strength to wait!'

'As thy days, so shall thy strength be,' whispered Emma, passing her arm once more round her: and no more was said by either till Mr. Wylde came out of his patient's room.

His report was so far satisfactory, that he could assure them there was no fracture or dangerous injury, as far as he could ascertain: but there was quite enough to require care, and above all, quiet and perfect rest. Any excitement or exertion might be highly prejudicial, and her ladyship must see as few persons as

possible—no more than was absolutely compatible with attentive nursing. Any one whose appearance was likely to cause emotion, of whatever kind—he looked at nobody particularly, when saying this, but was pointedly significant and emphatic—*could* not be too careful—at least, for the present. A few days would, he trusted, render such precautions unnecessary. One thing more he would just observe in taking leave—that unless Lady Adelaide Lyndon was a little more prudent than she had evidently been that day—and if she did not at once lie down and rest—he should soon have two patients instead of one.

However sound Lady Adelaide felt this advice to be, it was not so easy to follow it. True, she was calm enough now to feel thankful for the relief he had given to her vague fears, and for the door of hope so unexpectedly opened in the midst of her trial; but *rest*, with heart, brain, and nerves all on the stretch at once, was a blessing just then beyond her reach. Even could she have compelled herself to seek it, it would not have been of much use; for soon after Mr. Wylde's departure, the party came home from Shareham, and she had to hasten to meet and explain to Penelope. It was not the pleasantest task in the world. Miss Lyndon would have been the first to welcome and cherish the unexpected guest, if she had been on the spot to receive her, and take the lead in ordering and arranging; but to come home and find all this to-do and commotion, her whole establishment upside down, as it were, and she treated as nobody in the business—was rather too much for her equanimity.

Upon my word, what next?' bustling about the while with her parcels and packages. 'It is very odd that some people will never condescend to look at one when they are well and comfortable; and directly anything troublesome happens, here they are on one's hands, whether one likes it or not! Oh, of course, she is welcome—anybody is welcome whom my father chooses to invite; and of course, your mother—I only say, it *is*, very odd, and I suppose there is no treason in that, so you needn't look so disconsolate, my dear: she is here, and here she must stay, and there's an end of it. Only I have no idea of having Emma worked off her feet with nursing everybody, on her first visit to us; so whether her ladyship likes me, or doesn't like me, I shall just take the liberty of seeing how she is, myself.'

Upstairs she flew, and on knocking and sending in her name, was speedily admitted by Lady Delaunay's desire: leaving Adelaide and Walter, who had followed, standing in the passage. Perhaps, of all her humiliations, that of seeing Penelope march past her into that room, was one of the most irritating Lady Adelaide had ever known—the more so from her boy's eager wonder, and impatient

questions, which she could not bear to answer. But she had promised to be patient, and she did her best to keep her word ; hushing Walter's resentful murmurs at her exclusion, and by encouraging his hopes, in some degree strengthening her own. She was not quite unrewarded ; for when Miss Lyndon came out again, and saw them standing there, her mood softened wonderfully. She came up to her sister-in-law, and gave her a hearty kiss.

'I am charmed with her,' she whispered, eagerly ; 'I am, indeed ; a dear old lady, with the sweetest manners in the world—I like her vastly. She shall have the best we can give her ; I will nurse her myself ; and she *shall* make it up with you, and that very soon—or my name is not Penelope, and I shall shake her in her bed.'

So comforted and cheered by one and another, Adelaide got through that day.

She hoped, herself, that her mother would ask for her the next morning : and if she did, no medical authority would keep her away—surely, if Lady Delaunay knew she was in the house, she must feel her place was by her bedside, instead of those strangers. To them she was all sweetness and gentleness—would she be hard and severe to her alone ? No ; she had only to wait cheerfully and hopefully, and the summons must come, and in that faith she struggled through the numerous duties that necessarily fell to her charge, from the demand on the time of Penelope and Emma : amused the baby—soothed Mrs. Lyndon—listened to the Squire—received and answered notes and inquiries, and kept Walter quiet and employed. Still at every spare interval, she lingered by the inexorable door ; and her wistful, longing eyes, whenever it was opened, went to the hearts of those who saw. Miss Lyndon thought, as she told her, she was giving a pretty broad hint, when she offered to write to or send for any member of Lady Delaunay's family, whose anxiety she might wish to relieve : but the Countess seemed not to discern her meaning. She thanked her for her politeness, but trusting to be well enough to travel in two or three days, she was unwilling to add to the inconvenience she knew she must be causing. If she would be good enough to forward a few lines she had contrived to write in pencil to her niece, Miss Conway, she should be much obliged ; for the rest, unless it was putting too much on her kind friends, she would rather remain in their hands only.

'Of course,' said Miss Lyndon, as she reported this to the committee she had called to sit on the state of affairs—'I could say no more after that ; besides, I have been talking to her servant, Mr. Anderson (a very civil man he is, and waits better than any one I ever saw in my life), and he tells me her ladyship always knows her own wishes best, and expects them to be carried out exactly ; but I

must say, Miss Conway ought to know the real state of the case, and that Lady Delaunay is not likely to be well enough for a journey quite so soon as she expects. The responsibility will then rest with her, and not with us.'

This was agreed to, with an amendment moved by Emma, that instead of Miss Conway being written to, Henry should be commissioned to deliver the note in person. For this Adelaide's eyes thanked her warmly: the prospect of her cousin's arrival to stand between her and her mother, had seemed a death-blow to every hope: and neither of them expected Henry would deem it necessary to send her down by the next train.

'But oh, Emma!' said Adelaide, when they were alone together soon after, 'can you not soon speak a word for me? She may not, after all, know that I am in the house, and will not condescend to ask; and if this goes on, I shall break down—I am not so strong as I was, and this hope deferred makes my heart so very, very weary—'

'Do you think I do not see that?' interrupted Emma, tenderly. 'If it only rested with me, or if she were only anybody else—but if nobody else will lead the forlorn hope, I suppose I must.'

It was no light task she had undertaken, and very nervous it made her to think about. Her powers had been tolerably tried of late, and much as she admired and felt for Lady Delaunay, she could not contemplate without trepidation the possibility of giving her offence—even if she escaped doing her positive injury. Not till the next morning did she find an opportunity; but the sight of Adelaide's face, after a sleepless night—a return of her old symptoms not to be trifled with—decided her to lose no more time. The Countess appeared freer from pain, and had just been thanking her, after some one of her many kind offices, for her goodness to a helpless and troublesome stranger. Her smile gave Mrs. Henry Lyndon the momentary courage she wanted.

'Ah, madam,' she said, as she bent over the bed to arrange the pillows, and smooth the coverlid, 'the best that a stranger can do at these times, is, after all, of little worth. There is *one* near at hand, whose place I can only imperfectly fill—whose love and tenderness would forestall your wishes—who would be to you now what no other can!'

Lady Delaunay half raised herself in her bed, and looked fixedly in her face.

'It is presumptuous in me—' continued Emma, hurrying on in great confusion. 'I must entreat you to pardon me for interfering; but if you only could see her anxiety and distress—if you only knew how she watched at your door——'

'At this door?' repeated Lady Delaunay, glancing half fearfully round.

‘Yes, just outside, longing to come in—so that we can hardly keep her out. Oh, what may I tell her?’

Lady Delaunay was silent for some minutes, still earnestly looking in Emma’s face.

‘Tell her,’ she said, at last, in a tone of deep sadness, that forbade further remonstrance, ‘that if my wishes have any influence over her *now*—which hitherto she has given me no reason to believe—she will not attempt to see me without my permission. If she does—if she crosses that threshold, unauthorized by me, it will be at her own peril. She will understand what that means—and why. For you, my dear young friend, to whom I owe so much already, let me add to my burden one obligation more. Reserve your judgment of me and mine till you know *all*. Spare my old shattered frame such a trial as you propose, till it has regained sufficient spring of nerve to go through it. I may seem hard and cruel—I may have been so represented—but at present I am only a weak old woman, in immediate and pressing need of strength; and as such, more an object for your compassion than for your censure.’

She held out her hand to Emma, who felt she could say no more.

But when she repeated this scene to Lady Adelaide, she was quite unprepared for the effect it would produce. Instead of depressing her hopes, it stung them into keener vitality. Her mother had not said she would *not* admit her—only that she must wait for permission, and that permission might come at any hour, whenever she felt strong enough. She thanked Emma with tears, for her intercession, imploring both her and Penelope to watch for the first moment of softened feeling, and seize it before it had time to grow obdurate again; and in an agony of fear lest such a moment should find her out of reach, she took up her station, either in the dressing-room, or, when the intermediate door was obliged to be open, in the passage outside.

Hour after hour, insensible to cold, or fatigue, or hunger, she waited and watched through all that day, till the night was far advanced; and with the first dawn of light, was there waiting and watching again; deaf to argument and entreaty, to Mr. Lyndon’s remonstrances and Walter’s coaxing; or if she seemed for a few minutes disposed to yield, looked so intensely miserable, no one could persist, though everybody trembled for the consequences. Indeed Mr. Wylde told Emma it would soon be necessary to decide which patient should be sacrificed for the other; as, whatever might be the risk of exciting Lady Delaunay, the nerves and strength of her daughter would not hold out much longer.

That afternoon the Countess left her bed; and though suffering

acutely from rheumatic pains in almost every joint, persisted in sitting up some time, trying to persuade herself and others that she was rapidly getting well. If courage and energy would have cured her, the doctor would have had little trouble; but her accident had shaken her delicate frame much more than she was willing to believe; and when Emma looked at her reclining in the easy-chair, shrunk, wasted, and pale, yet with such firmness of purpose and resolution in the pinched features and steadfast eyes, she hardly knew whether to admire or pity her most; or whether fear did not predominate over both. How to break the silence, or disturb the deep reverie into which Lady Delaunay had sunk, by renewing the petition that had been so unequivocally rejected before, was equally beyond Mrs. Henry Lyndon's skill and courage; but while she was busying herself in her usual noiseless way, with the arrangement of the different waifs and strays that will accumulate, let the nurse be as tidy as she may, she was surprised to see her patient slowly rise, stand a few minutes, as if to make sure of her strength, and then walk steadily across the room. Emma inquired if she wanted anything. No; she only wished to try what she could do; and as she spoke, she opened the door, and stood face to face with her daughter.

The shock of surprise to both was so great, each recoiled a step at the same moment; then Adelaide, as if struck down by the hand of Heaven, sank on her knees before her mother—her face as white as her clasped hands, and her parted lips vainly struggling to give utterance to the supplication that rushed to them. Lady Delaunay stood perfectly still, as pale as her daughter, and as silent; but stern as a statue of Destiny. Emma, as startled as either of them, looked breathlessly on, in expectation of what would follow.

Adelaide's choked voice broke on the silence first. 'My mother—my dear, dear mother—speak to me!—'

It was all she could say. A grey hue crept over the wasted features of the Countess; she sank into the chair, that Emma's quick hand brought forward, and rested her head on her shoulder.

'Speak to me, mother!' said Adelaide, again, as not daring to cross the threshold, she knelt in the doorway, and the tears she could not check fell hot and fast—'for all my long banishment, all my bitter repentance, all my hopeless longing for a sight of your face, and a touch of your hand—give me but one word! I do not ask for your favour, or your love—those I have lost, and I bow to my sentence; but give me something to make me hope, to help me to be patient, to keep me from despondency of myself, and rebellion against God! One word to tell me you have not cast me off utterly—that I may yet one day redeem your trust—that though I never again can be what I was, I may yet look you in the face without



the dread and shame that bow me now to the earth before you! Oh, mother, mother! . . . if you have a hope of yourself receiving mercy from Heaven, show some to me!

Her agony of weeping drowned her voice; she clasped her hands over her face, and sobbed as if her heart was breaking. Emma, whose tears were now running down her cheeks, anxiously watched Lady Delaunay, in hopes of some token of relenting; but all she could read in those locked, rigid features, were resolution and suffering. Alarmed by the change in her complexion, and the fluttering of her pulse, she tried to warn Adelaide of the risk; but she might as well have attempted to stay a mountain torrent with a twig, as to arrest the rush of that long-restrained emotion by word or sign.

‘Mother! when you saw me last, I was young, headstrong, self-willed; defying evils I had never known, and unmindful of blessings, valued only when lost. I preferred my judgment to yours—I even believed you to be unjust, cruel in what you had done, and that what my words failed to convince you of, would be proved by my actions. Your look at that dreadful moment fell on me like a curse from Heaven; and as such has pursued me ever since. Under the scorching sun of India, or tossed in the storms of the sea—in sickness, in disappointment, in privation, and in peril—by the death-bed of my child, by the body of my husband—go where I would, suffer as I might, through all the long hours of desolation and widowhood, that curse has been with me still—the bitterest drop in every bitter cup—the heaviest load in every heavy burden. Now youth and youth’s bright hopes are gone from me for ever, and all that your anger denounced has come upon me—mother, we meet again. Am I still to be looked upon as I was then? If my fault was heavy, has my punishment been light? Is there no forgiveness, no restoration to be won by repentance or granted to suffering? Is it a small thing that I have borne so long the doom, usually reserved for those who disgrace their birth—that strangers may point at me as the alien of my race—and every lip taunt me unchecked, that the hired servants of my mother’s house may look in her face when they will, but that it is forbidden to me? But let that pass; if it is your pleasure that it should be so, I bow to it; only give me a hope, as faint, as distant as you will—set me some task, however hard, toilsome, humiliating, as a condition of forgiveness—and I will perform it, if I live; it will be something to live for, even if I never succeed. Oh, mother! so small a grace—implored upon my knees—can it be that I must implore in vain?’

Emma felt the hand she held grasp hers convulsively, and returned the pressure with an urgent gesture of entreaty. ‘Oh, dear madam, speak to her, if it is only one word!’

Lady Delaunay, whose head had sunk on her bosom, turned slowly at this appeal, raised herself from her chair by an effort of which she had seemed incapable, and supporting herself against it, looked down on her suppliant daughter. What that look revealed—how much of its sternness had melted into yearning pity, Adelaide's blinded eyes could not see; but the voice in which she spoke at last was strangely hollowed and broken.

'Adelaide, I trusted you and you deceived me—I loved you, and you left me. God kept my heart from breaking, with the hope that yours would change; and if this had but been done sooner—'

Her voice was nearly gone; she was forced to pause for breath, and to continue almost in a whisper. 'You ask me for a test; I have but one—obedience. Prove by your actions that your repentance is sincere. I can bear no more now—I wish that door to be shut.'

She turned away with Emma's help, and slowly and painfully regained her bed, murmuring, as she stretched herself upon it, 'Comfort her, if you can; but keep your word to me!'

There was but one thing to be done, though it went to Emma's heart. She made an attempt to close the door; Adelaide looked up in her face with a mute expression of despair, that melted her very soul within her. It did seem hard she should be obliged to perform so cruel a task; she felt how she should have hated anybody who did it to *her*; but it must be done—only how was she to shut the door on those thin white fingers, that clung to the post as if it was their last hope?

'Dear Lady Adelaide, my own dear friend,' she whispered, as tenderly and lovingly as she felt towards her, 'submit once more!—obey her command!—it will do more for you than any entreaties. Hope on, trust, and persevere; and if you are as generous and high-minded as I believe you to be, forgive me for what I *must* do—I *must* shut you out.'

'Oh, Emma!—to see her, to hear her—and to have won no more than this; What can I—what shall I do more than I have done?'

'Obey; that is all you *can* do now. Her health—her very life may depend upon her being left quiet. I have promised to guard the privacy of her room; help me to keep my promise—and pardon it.'

She gently unclasped Adelaide's fingers. Adelaide offered no resistance; her hand dropped powerless on her knee, and as the door was slowly closed, she sank on the ground—heart, strength, and spirits alike crushed and broken down.

There Penelope found her, and not a little frightened she was at her state. She raised her almost by force, and half-leading, half-

dragging her, contrived to get her into her own room, and lay her on her bed; then gave her a brisk scolding by way of restorative; and ended by throwing her arms round her neck, and crying over her more heartily than she had done since the news of Walter's death. Perhaps a more soothing treatment might have been suggested; but it seemed to answer the purpose; for Adelaide, too worn out herself to weep any more, felt those tears deeply, and resting her aching head on her sister-in-law's shoulder, loved her, as she had once believed to be impossible.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

*Portia.*—Why, know'st thou any harm's intended towards him?

*Soothsayer.*—None that I know will be, much that I fear may chance.

*Shakespeare.*

MISS CONWAY was out when Henry Lyndon called in Bryanstone Square; but on sending in his card to Mrs. Marsden, with a request to speak with her for a few moments on business, he was speedily admitted; and found the old lady, with her trumpet in one hand, and her spectacles in the other, anxiously studying the said card, in such a flurry of eagerness to know his errand, as almost deprived her of the faculty of understanding it.

'Come close to me, or I can't hear you. There, sit down there, Mr. Henry Lyndon. Now, are you a relation of that poor young thing's husband that was?'

'Captain Lyndon was my cousin, ma'am.'

'How is she, poor creature?'

'She is just recovered from an attack of illness, brought on by nervous anxiety and agitation.'

'Bless me, think of that! Young people can't be so strong in these days as they used to be: at her age, I never knew what being nervous meant, and it doesn't make me ill, even now. I hope she has all she wants?'

Henry slightly shrugged his shoulders, with a smile.

'Because, lowering her voice instinctively, 'if not, I don't mind telling you, as one of her husband's family, I have some money to spare at my banker's; and if I knew how much she wanted, I could draw her a cheque in a minute.'

He thanked her cordially in Lady Adelaide's name, but suggested, that from what she knew of that lady's character, it would not surprise her to find her shrink from accepting assistance from her relations, while she was refused their regard and good-will.

'Dear me, and that is true; though she has always had mine, I

am sure, and you may tell her so; but what can anybody do so long as she is on bad terms with her mother? Why doesn't she beg her pardon at once, and have done with it?

'Because, Mrs. Marsden, she has not been allowed the opportunity.'

'Can't she write to her?'

'Lady Delaunay refused to receive her letters.'

'Well, but there is her brother—there is Charlotte Conway;—where there is a will, there is a way. Don't tell me, if a young woman feels she has done wrong, that she can find no means of saying so; for I don't believe it!'

'Mrs. Marsden, believe *this*, for I can prove it to you; Lady Adelaide *has* tried every means in her power, and to no purpose.'

'I never knew it, then, nor her mother either, I am sure of that.'

'No—you were not meant to know. But others *did*.'

'Bless me, Mr. Henry Lyndon, you quite frighten me.'

'I hope not; I only wish you to know the truth. Lady Delaunay must sooner or later, and I trust it will be very soon. Do you know where she is at this moment?'

'In the country: we had a few lines from a place called Sharcham, just to say she was there. Why? what has happened?'

Henry explained succinctly, producing the note. The old lady was too shocked and startled at first, to take any but an alarming view of the matter; and was with difficulty brought to understand that Lady Delaunay was quite capable of giving her own orders, and had expressly declined the proposal of sending for a London surgeon, or for her carriage and servants. In the fulness of her heart, she poured out to her visitor all the circumstances of poor dear Mary's sudden journey; letting in a flood of light on his understanding which he did not the least expect. It was not till her spirits were a little relieved by this safety-valve, that she was able to consider calmly the new position of affairs; but suddenly it seemed to dawn upon her.

'Why, then, Mr. Henry Lyndon, if what you say is true, supposing poor dear Mary not to be much hurt, it seems, after all, that it was the luckiest thing in the world that could have happened. Don't you see, they are together now, and what is to hinder them from having it all out, and talking it quietly over, and making it up comfortably? Goodness me, how glad I shall be! Why, Mary will be bringing her back with her—see if she doesn't!'

'I think with you, madam, there is good reason for hope, provided they are left to themselves. Anybody interfering between them would only leave matters rather worse than they were before.'

'Ay, meddlers always make mischief. Then you don't seem to think Charlotte Conway would be of much use down there?'

'Decidedly the reverse, for more reasons than one.'

'I am glad I asked you. I'll take care she doesn't go. You are not in a hurry, are you?'

'Not if I can be of service by remaining.'

'Then, don't speak too fast, or I shan't understand; but just tell me everything you know about the child Ada; I have heard nothing of her for years, except what I didn't want to hear.'

Thus encouraged, and reading in her looks her honesty of purpose, Henry was only too glad to speak; and with all the warmth of friendship and true feeling, described Lady Adelaide—her past struggles with adversity—her present desolation—her long agony of repentance—her many bitter disappointments—her recent illness brought on by mental suffering—till his own eyes grew moist at the picture he drew, and Mrs. Marsden was wiping hers fast.

'Surely, surely,' she repeated, 'her brother doesn't know all this, nor Charlotte either; or they would have done something long ago.'

'Mrs. Marsden, her brother *does* know it, and was so much touched, that I am quite sure he would be glad to see a complete reconciliation; but there is one member of your family who will never suffer it to take place, if she can prevent it.'

'You don't mean that? Really?'

'I am certain of it.'

She looked at him significantly; he held up his finger with a shake of the head, for he heard a step on the stairs, and the next moment the door opened, and Miss Conway came in.

If she was startled at his unexpected appearance, which all her presence of mind could not conceal, he was scarcely less so by the change in hers. She looked many years older than when he saw her last; her forehead bore the lines of continual contraction, her cheeks had grown thinner, her eyes were dimmed and hollow, though they lighted up with all their keenest intelligence directly they fell on the face of the lawyer. He rose as she came in, with a bow, and presented her aunt's note; and while she opened it, Mrs. Marsden saved him the trouble of repeating his explanations, by repeating them herself, so that in a few minutes she understood the whole. In every way it was a severe blow, and her agitation was considerable, and though mixed up in motive, evidently sincere.

There is a great stress laid sometimes on poetical justice, as if it were the special privilege of that tribunal to keep a store of pet punishments at hand, for the demolition of the iniquitous that come under their jurisdiction. We are not going to quarrel with

so venerable a court; the rather that there are few courts existing whose decrees have been equally refreshing to the public generally. What a blessing it is when Hatteraick breaks Glossin's neck—when Bertram Risingham rids us of Oswald—when Hawkeye, who ought to be ashamed of himself for not doing it sooner, sends a rifle bullet into Magua at last! Who grudges Mr. Pecksniff old Martin's cudgel—or the express train to Mr. Carker—or the falling pillar to Arbaces the Egyptian—or feels the slightest compunction about the thumb screws, and other *peines fortes et dures*, so delicately hinted at to Iago? Even that most trying catastrophe of the well-known secret passage with the spring lock, which you cannot possibly find, or if you do find, cannot possibly open, and are consequently and most deservedly eaten up alive by the rats—is not without its charm, in disposing of a baneful evil genius, on whom ordinary castigation would be thrown away. And yet it may be questioned—according to the modern fashion of questioning the value of every ancient institution—whether this machinery of vengeance be not, after all, in many cases, a superfluous expenditure of power. There is one species of punishment, which selfish schemers, such as was Miss Conway, carry constantly about with them; not exactly conscience—for conscience can be hardened; nor remorse—for remorse only gnaws at intervals; nor is it the dread of a future retribution—for that a practical unbelief can do wonders in explaining away—but a wretchedness which draws poignancy from all and each of these; a sorrow that worketh death, by urging the spirit from bad to worse in the vain hope of escaping it; blinding the understanding, and bewildering the judgment, till they are driven to measures from which they would once have recoiled—even as any one individual of a panic-stricken crowd would recoil in cold blood from the leap, or the rush, or the struggle that adds its unit to the great sum of murder and agony.

The anguish of Adelaide Lyndon, weeping at her mother's door, was not in reality so terrible as that which hourly consumed her rival, from whom that mother had parted with a blessing; for prayer and humility are mighty comforters—but a prayerless, unrepentant suffering who can bear? It was impossible for any heart, not utterly dead to all feeling, to be insensible to such constant kindness as Lady Delaunay showed her niece; and it was equally impossible for her to contemplate without terror, what would be the result of her discovering how that kindness had been repaid. This last fear it was, that whenever her better angel whispered to her aching soul of a blessed relief in restitution and amendment, couched like a lion in the path, and forced her to believe there was no retreat possible; that at all hazards she *must* go on, and purchase indemnity by success. Therefore, notwith-

standing the pang of remorse that had overwhelmed her when she took leave of her aunt—notwithstanding the sickening dread with which she waited, hour by hour, for news from abroad—she took no steps to undo what she had done, nor relaxed in any degree from her usual habits of watchfulness and diplomacy. These had in the present instance been rather at fault; but how could she foresee, that during the short interval so necessary to refresh her wearied brain with a little exercise, her stronghold would be invaded in her absence by the very antagonist whose acuteness she dreaded most?

She treated him, however, with marked civility; expressed her strong sense of gratitude to his family for the hospitable kindness her aunt described herself as receiving; and was adding something about soon testifying it in person, when Mrs. Marsden, who was listening with her trumpet raised, broke in with unusual vehemence—

‘You are not thinking of leaving me, Charlotte?’

‘Dearest Mrs. Marsden, not from choice; nothing but a sense of duty——’

‘You wouldn’t be so unkind and cruel, would you? I can’t be left alone, and I won’t; so there is an end of it. Your aunt does not want you, or she would say so; and *I* do. I wonder you could think of such a thing! but of course, a poor old woman like me must be such dull company, you are only too glad of an excuse——’

Miss Conway interrupted her with an embrace, and fervent protestations of affection.

‘Well, well, that’s all very fine, but will you promise not to go?’

‘Not without your full consent. Pray, pray compose yourself. You see how it is, Mr. Lyndon,’ she continued, as she followed Henry to the door; ‘between two such dear friends, both claiming my care at once, my poor heart is well-nigh torn to pieces.’

‘It is indeed a gratifying thing to be so valuable,’ said Henry.

A hasty report was all he had leisure to despatch to Cannymoor; the precious time he had lost all his diligence could not recover; and as he toiled through the mass of accumulated work, he felt strongly inclined to repeat, ‘A plague on both your houses!’ to say nothing of his own. He hoped that he had seen and heard the last of them for that day at least, but he was doomed to be disappointed. Just as he was leaving his chambers, after a hard day’s work, he received a note from Mr. Powys, begging to see him on urgent business as soon as possible. The messenger had a cab with him, in hopes of conveying him back then and there; and Mr. Powys was on the look-out, and opened the door of his house to him in person. He thanked him warmly for his prompt com-

pliance with his summons, for which he would apologize, had not their mutual friend Mr. Randolph referred them to each other in case of anything transpiring in which they were all interested. As every moment was precious, he would come to the point at once, and installing Henry in his own arm-chair, he proceeded to put him in possession of certain facts just come to his knowledge.

It appeared that for some time past, Mrs. Marsden's confidential maid and housekeeper, Blanchard, had been under the impression that there was something underhand going on in her mistress's house; a system of spying and listening, which, though she could not actually detect, became more and more perceptible. Miss Brittan seemed to be the principal agent; but Blanchard, a shrewd, observant woman, felt pretty certain that she was an agent only, taking her instructions from somebody else. The many whisperings, closetings and other mysteries that took place whenever Miss Conway came, were by no means so unnoticed as the ladies supposed. The servants had been in the habit of watching them a long time, and the secret of the French novels was none to them. The circumstance of the missing key had confirmed Blanchard's worse suspicions, and on the evening before Lilla Brittan's flight, she had tried to persuade her to make a full avowal, and trust to the kindness of Mrs. Marsden, but in vain.

Enough, however, transpired to satisfy the housekeeper that the young lady was not the only guilty person, nor, indeed, the guiltiest; though, having no proof either way, she could say nothing. When Miss Conway came to stay in the house with her maid, she watched them both, and every day with increased dissatisfaction: it was bad enough to have Miss Brittan peeping into every letter, and opening every drawer, and listening at every door; but when it came to that pert Mrs. Forrest doing the same, it was past bearing, and she told her so. Forrest, secure in her mistress's support, answered sharply, and a private feud had been some days in progress, which at last had come to a public quarrel, and an appeal from Blanchard to Mrs. Marsden 'which of them must go?' Mrs. Marsden, to whom the idea of losing her housekeeper was only a shade removed from utter ruin, called in Miss Conway, and implored for Forrest's dismissal. Forrest, who had boasted loudly that *her* mistress would take her part, was beyond measure exasperated to find she was not disposed to offend Mrs. Marsden for her sake, and that instead of bringing her off with flying colours, she wanted her to strike and surrender. Apologize and make friends with Blanchard, indeed! she should do no such thing—not she; she had only obeyed orders, and tried to give satisfaction, and if apologies were to be made, let them who gave the orders take the shame. It was on no errand of her own she was looking into Mrs. Marsden's bureau, which



Blanchard made such a hubbub about, and what was more——. And so she went on, working herself up to a pitch of rage, in which she grew so insolent to her mistress, the latter had no choice but to express the greatest indignation, and discharge her on the spot. Mindful of her own risk, however (though this fact was not told Henry, as it was only known to themselves), Miss Conway made a very handsome addition to her wages, sufficient she hoped, to bring her to reason, and remind her where her interest lay involved. It was, however, contemptuously returned; the woman's rage made her indifferent to everything but the desire for revenge, and she let fall some expressions to Blanchard (against whom her animosity had now proportionately cooled), which alarmed the latter not a little, and made her determine to find out their meaning. She persuaded Forrest to remain quietly in the house, and when Miss Conway, who supposed her gone, was out in the carriage, laid the matter once more before Mrs. Marsden.

'So far,' said Mr. Powys, who had given the above in a much more cursory manner than we have done, 'the case is nothing more than a scene of domestic annoyance and petty passions, such as are best confined to the sphere in which they occur; the impatience I felt when it was being told me I dare say you are feeling now. But I soon found there was some reason for the dismay that had made the good old lady send off for me in such a hurry, and receive me in such mysterious secrecy. It seems that Mrs. Forrest had said plainly that there was mischief brewing that nobody had any idea of, and that if in a day or two we heard some shocking news, it might surprise *us*, but would not surprise *her*. I expect this escaped in her anger, rather prematurely; for no persuasion could make her explain; she would only repeat that mischief *was* brewing, and that it would soon come out: the rest of her eloquence being expended in denouncing her mistress, who, she said, had made a tool of her for her own mean ends, and then, when things went wrong, turned round upon her like this. Fearing at last that Miss Conway would return and interrupt the examination, I invited the woman, as she had no place to go to, to come home with me, and stay with my housekeeper for the present, and then sent off that unceremonious summons to you. It occurred to me that you would know better how to extract evidence than I did. I may be mistaken in the alarm I feel on the subject, but alarmed I am, and till I know the truth, I cannot rest.'

'Can I see the woman?' asked Henry, without expressing any opinion one way or the other.

'Certainly, in a minute,' and in answer to his summons a smart, sharp-looking little person speedily appeared, looking, however, rather frightened at the sight of a stranger.

'Come in, Mrs. Forrest,' said Mr. Powys; 'you have no reason to be nervous, if you will only be frank and open. This gentleman is a lawyer, and well known to Lord Delaunay, and if there really is what you call "mischief brewing," in which the family is concerned, he may put us in the way of stopping or remedying it, if he only knows the particulars in time. So now let me persuade you to keep us no longer in suspense, but make us all your friends by a plain statement of the truth.'

She hesitated, and murmured something of being afraid.

'Perhaps,' said Henry, smiling, 'you are rather afraid of saying how you came by this information—is that it?'

'Well, sir, you see——'

'I do see. But would it not be pleasanter for you to tell us two here in confidence, than to be put upon your oath in a court of justice, and cross-examined as a witness before a great many people—as you may be for all I know?'

'Oh, sir, sir, I hope not! Indeed, I had nothing to do with it!'

'But you know all about it, whatever it may be; and if it prove to be something serious, you will certainly be called upon to say what you know; and if you do not tell you will be sent to prison.'

She began to sob, and petition to be excused. If she had only known, she would have said nothing; and all she was afraid of now was of doing more harm by speaking than by holding her tongue.

'Leave that for us to decide for you, and just speak out honestly, like an upright, sensible woman. I promise you shall be protected from the consequences; and if you really save Lord Delaunay's family from trouble by so doing, you may be sure of both thanks and reward.'

This was not without visible effect, but still she went on crying, without coming to the point, and Mr. Powys was on the very brink of an explosion of anxiety and impatience. Henry waited a little while, and then turned to him, saying very coolly, 'It is of no use wasting our time here, sir; it is evident there is nothing really of consequence, and I am only sorry so much should have been made of a trifle.'

Before Mr. Powys could answer, Mrs. Forrest had started up in great indignation. 'A trifle do you call it, sir? You will soon see if it is or not!'

'There, there, my good woman, we do not want you to excite yourself. You were angry, and did not quite know what you were talking about, I dare say.'

'I did know, sir! and I know now! and since you please to think it such a trifle, I just ask you, sir, what do you suppose a gentleman would be likely to do, if he heard that another gentleman was coming to him with a letter of introduction from his own

mother—she, poor dear lady, not knowing all the while that he was a mean, artful sort of a man, who had done the family all the mischief he could, and was trying to do some more? I ask you now, sir, what would such a gentleman be likely to do?’

‘*That*,’ said Henry, brushing his coat-sleeve with his cuff, as if the question was one of the most perfect indifference to him, ‘would depend very much on the manner in which the information was given, and the person who gave it.’

‘Suppose that person was his own intimate friend and cousin, that his own sister was the party concerned, and that it was told him in such a way that he couldn’t help believing it?’

‘Why, in that case, it would probably be an awkward business.’

‘Not a mere trifle, sir, you think?’

‘Certainly not.’

‘Then don’t ask me how I know it, for I’m not going to tell you; but that is just how the matter stands between my lord, and Mr. Randolph, and Miss Conway; and now you may judge for yourselves if there’s mischief or not. I should say there was; but then I’m not a gentleman, nor a nobleman either, so I may be wrong.’

‘On the contrary, Mrs. Forrest,’ said Henry, without noticing the consternation and horror painted on Mr. Powys’ face, ‘it is you who are right, and I who am wrong. Pray sit down a moment.’ And placing a chair for her with much politeness, he sat down by her side. ‘I was wrong, and I beg your pardon. But as we must be careful what we are about, for your sake as well as our own, perhaps you will not object to answering a few questions about your sudden dismissal from Miss Conway’s service. So confidential an attendant would not have been parted with unless for some sufficient reason. Was it because you opened Mrs. Marsden’s bureau without orders?’

‘No indeed, sir! It was by her orders I did it. She wanted me to find a bundle of old papers that were kept somewhere in the house, and I was to look every where till I found it.’

‘Did you find them after all?’

‘No, sir; and it’s not the first piece of work I have had all along of that same bundle, for she thought once it was dropped in my lady’s carriage, and told me if I could find and bring it to her—quietly, you know—she would give me a new gown. But I never could hear anything of it, and no wonder, for it was all the while in my lady’s own room.’

‘Then I am afraid you lost your gown, as well as your time and trouble. That was a pity.’

‘No, sir; I had my gown—but that was for something else.’

‘You were very useful to her, I have no doubt. Were you often in the habit of doing these little private errands?’

'Oh yes, sir, scores of times. I hope she will find some one as able and willing to serve her, as I have been, I'm sure!'

'I should think that may be difficult. Do you know what was to have been done with that parcel, if you found it?'

'I can guess, sir, that it would go where two others went, that she brought home in her muff, and burnt in her grate by handfuls at a time, and nobody knew of it but me.'

'She put great trust in your cleverness and discretion, it seems?'

'Well, sir, I think she did. She used to make me watch every letter that came into the house; and she had a way of opening and fastening them up again, so that nobody could find it out.'

'Very ingenious; did it take you long to learn?'

'Oh dear no, sir: I could do it quite as well as herself at last.'

'She made you do it for her, then?'

'No sir; but I have seen her do it, often and often.'

'And that put it into your head to do the same to her own letters?'

'Oh, sir—what makes you fancy such a thing?'

'Never mind: between friends, now—am I not pretty near the mark?'

'Well, really, sir, when she did it herself to my lady's and sometimes my lord's too, I did think there could not be much harm——'

'In paying the same compliment to hers. Very natural that you should. And that is how you came to know what she had written to Lord Delaunay about Mr. Randolph,

She hung her head, as she murmured a reluctant 'Yes, sir.'

Mr. Powys got up, walked up and down the room, and sat down again: Henry went on with unmoved composure.

'Now, Mrs. Forrest, having ascertained that point, I must say a few words to you, very seriously. If this were to be known, your character is gone—hopelessly gone; for who would take a person into their service, however quick and clever, on whose integrity they could not depend? I do not wonder you were unwilling to explain this little circumstance, but it was necessary we should know on what kind of evidence we are going to act. On your discretion *now* will depend your future fate. Should Miss Conway learn how you have betrayed her, the fact of her having taught you the way to do it, might not deter her from exposing *you* to her friends; and I leave you to judge whether you would gain much by recrimination. It would be of little consequence to a lady asking your character, whether your late mistress was an honourable woman or not: but it would go very hard with *you* were she to be told you could not be trusted with a sealed letter.'

'Oh sir, sir—what am I to do? You promised me——'

'I promised you protection and reward: I do still, if you implicitly follow the directions I shall give you. First, to tell nobody a word of what has passed till you have leave; secondly, neither to see nor communicate with Miss Conway in *any* way for the same period; and thirdly, to take into your serious and thoughtful consideration, whether sticking to the good old rule of honesty and straightforwardness would not be safer and better in the end.'

The woman cried bitterly, but more, as it seemed, from fright than penitence. Between her sobs, he made out that there was more he ought to know, as he knew so much, and her chief dread seemed now of not being sufficiently circumstantial.

'It all came on this way, sir, I do assure you: Mr. Randolph called one day in — Street to see Miss Conway, and when he heard she was gone to Bryanstone Square, went there after her. Well, sir, what passed between them I can't say, but when I saw her again in the afternoon, she looked dreadful—I was quite taken aback to see her. She gave me a foreign letter to post, in her secret way—she was wonderfully fond of secrets with all her letters, was my mistress, sir; she never could bear anybody to see them but me. Well, I felt sure something out of the common was the matter, and so you see, sir, I did just look inside, and I knew directly what she said was not true, because—oh now, sir, you do look at one so!—well, because I knew what Lady Adelaide Lyndon and she had written a little while before, was quite different, but I thought it was no business of mine, so I put it in the post, just in time. Only when my lord wrote so sharp, that he should try and not meet him if he could help it, but if he did, his mind was made up what to do——'

'What! you saw Lord Delaunay's answer, too, did you? You certainly are the most extraordinary combination of tenacity of purpose and laxity of principle that I ever met with. How did you manage *that*?'

'It was quite by accident, sir, I do assure you; but just after my lady left, the morning she went out of town, I found Miss Conway fainting in the breakfast parlour, and his lordship's letter dropped on the floor. It was very short, and I couldn't help just looking, but I wished I hadn't afterwards; for I couldn't sleep, sir, and that's the truth, for thinking of pistols—and what ever my lady would do if anything happened to my lord!'

'I am not surprised. Well, Mrs. Forrest, I need trouble you no further at present. You remain here to-night, I understand?'

'Mr. Powys is good enough, sir, to permit me,' she said, with an inquiring curtsy to the clergyman, who started up directly, repeating, 'Yes, yes, by all means. Here, Mrs. Grant! take care of

your visitor, and make her as comfortable as you can. That, sir,' he added, as the door closed on Mrs. Forrest, 'is a woman that must be watched, and my good housekeeper is the one to do it, as well as you or I could, and better. Well, what do you think of all this ?'

'I think it is a very serious business.'

'Ah !' said Mr. Powys, fetching a deep breath, 'so do I, much more so than I feared at first. What is to be done ?'

Henry looked at his watch. 'There is a boat direct to Hâvre to-night, I believe ; we have still some hours to spare. Either you or I must go ; which shall it be ?'

'You really think it would be of any use ?'

'Listen : I heard from Randolph this morning, that having been unexpectedly detained in Paris, he had not yet seen Lord Delaunay, and was just starting for Hâvre, expecting from what he knew of his movements to find him there. There is a chance, and a fair one, that he may not ; the Earl is not famous for keeping to any laid-down plan, and may be at the other end of France for all we know. One of us, starting to-night, might thus be in time to prevent their meeting, or if they should have met, to avert the serious results which I dread must ensue, on such a reception as Lord Delaunay is likely to give, and a high-spirited, independent fellow like Maurice Randolph, to resent. In short, something must be tried without an hour's delay at whatever sacrifice (in my case it is no small one just now), and if you cannot go, I must.'

For Mr. Powys to start that night was impossible, as his curate was away, and he had services and appointments to attend to that could not be left undone. It was decided after a little discussion that Henry should undertake the journey, and the clergyman remain to watch, and be ready to communicate with Lady Delaunay, when necessary. He insisted on the lawyer's waiting to share his frugal dinner, and over it they settled their plan of proceedings.

'If it turn out,' Henry Lyndon said, 'that our "curious impertinent" is correct, and that Lord Delaunay has been persuaded that Randolph has acted or is acting ill by his sister—Miss Conway, clever as she is, has made a false move. In simple justice, he cannot refuse to appeal to Lady Adelaide's testimony, and if he once sees her again, I defy him not to take her part.'

It was a busy night for the active lawyer before starting for the steamer. Among other letters, he wrote a few hurried lines to his uncle, simply announcing his being obliged to go abroad on business, and advising him, for divers reasons to come up to town immediately, and settle his own affairs without loss of time. He would write to his wife from the Continent, not having then a minute to spare.

The letter reached Cannymoor on the afternoon of the interview described in the last chapter, in company with one from Miss Conway to her aunt. She had already written to deplore her accident, and her own inability, owing to Mrs. Marsden's nervous excitement, to come down and nurse her herself; but this was a longer and more carefully worded epistle, in which, after many expressions of fondness and sympathy, she went on as follows:—

‘My heart is with you—bleeding for you; knowing what your noble nature will suffer, from appeals and supplications, to which your sense of justice and of your own dignity will make you unwilling to yield, and your generosity no less so to reject. One thing I must entreat; should you hear *me*, as you *may*, somewhat bitterly spoken against, pray do not take any notice of it. I cannot but feel, that the *more than maternal goodness* I have received from you, must naturally give rise to some soreness in the mind of *one*, who has learned by this time, through hard experience, *what* she so hastily threw away. I am the more anxious to press this point, that I believe, such are her difficulties, pecuniary and otherwise, that she will be ready to stoop to any concessions, or sacrifices, that would seem to open a door of escape from her present position. Of the family she lives with, not a little against her will, I have seen a specimen in the gentleman who brought me your note—a forward, under-bred personage enough. With all my grief for you, I could not help thinking how you would smile—keen observer of human nature as you are—to see how the exultation at having you among them at last, betrayed itself through all the assumed respect and profound sympathy. Oh! that I were by your side! I am sure no one can help showing you proper attention, but I cannot be grateful, because I am dying of envy; jealous unto death of everybody who is allowed to wait upon you, while I am forced to remain so far away.’

It was not without reluctance, that Emma, who had left the Countess, as she hoped, to repose, ventured to risk disturbing her by delivering this letter, even though she could not guess its contents. She opened the door with so much caution, it was unheard; and as she did so, a low sound fell on her ear, that thrilled her with awe and emotion. It was the voice of prayer and thanksgiving—broken, feeble, and exhausted—but so full of tenderness and yearning unutterable, Mrs. Henry Lyndon felt as if to intrude would be profanation. She laid the letter on the table, closed the door as noiselessly as she opened it, and hurried to see how far Adelaide, whom she had dreaded meeting before, was in a state to be comforted.

To her great relief, she found her much calmer than she could have expected; very much cast down, but resigned to accept her

fate, whatever it might be. One burden, at least, was gone; she had confessed her wrong-doing, and humbled herself for it—and of the comfort of humility no harshness could deprive her. The refreshment of prayer to One who never turns away, and the sympathy of those about her, never more welcome than now, kept her spirit from sinking when once its first agony was past; and it was a relief to them all that, at any rate, her feverish watching was over. But the very meekness of her sorrow only aggravated the resentment of her friends. Penelope, while petting her as if she were a child, could hardly look her in the face without a growl; or Lucy, without wiping her eyes; and Mr. Lyndon, between the affront shown to the whole family in her person, and the irritation of Henry's letter, was in a state of mind not easily to be described or endured. Half the evening he walked up and down the room, revolving what ought to be done; and the result appeared the next morning, when, everything being ready for his immediate departure for London, he sent up a formal message to the Countess, requesting, if convenient, to be allowed the honour of an interview.

He was admitted without a moment's hesitation on the part of Lady Delaunay, whom he found in her easy chair, making an effort to write a letter—rather a slow and painful one in the bruised condition of her hand and arm. She returned his ceremonious greeting with her most winning courtesy, thanking him for the opportunity of expressing to himself that deep sense of his goodness and hospitality, which she was in the act of expressing, as well as her helplessness would allow, to those who would feel it as she did, and would most probably remember it longer.

'Madam,' said Mr. Lyndon, drawing in his chair opposite hers, clearing his throat, and pulling down his waistcoat, as was his wont when about to deliver an opinion, or make a speech, 'my house, my family, my servants, are all at your ladyship's disposal, and you honour us beyond our deserts in accepting our poor services, and approving them. Your name has long been revered in this house, and since we have been allowed—ahem!—to witness those dignified virtues of which we have hitherto only heard, that reverence has deepened into admiration. But there is one subject—' again he cleared his throat, and tried hard not to appear embarrassed, 'to which I would ask permission to draw your ladyship's attention. Have I that permission? My time is short, being compelled to go up to London on business.'

Lady Delaunay bowed, with a slight change of countenance. He bowed in return, very low.

'I thank you, madam. It is a matter of deep interest to myself, as well as to another. Our family have long and painfully felt the involuntary wrong, inflicted by one dearly loved and early lost



member on *yours*. Circumstances have convinced us that the wrong has been grievously felt on your side. It would be a deep source of satisfaction to me and mine, if we could be assured from your ladyship's own lips, that you cherish no resentment against any of us.'

'My dear sir,' said Lady Delaunay, after a short struggle for composure, 'I should very ill deserve the esteem you are good enough to express so highly, if I felt resentment where I have received no injury; or if I could ever remember your kindness, and that of my gentle nurses, without more gratitude than can find vent in words.'

She held out her hand to Mr. Lyndon, who bowed over it—almost *à la Grandison*.

'Then, madam,' he continued, gravely, 'in extending your goodwill to all members of my family, I trust you will not do me the discourtesy to exclude my son's widow and her only child.'

There was a pause; Lady Delaunay's eyes gleamed brightly on him for a moment, and were then bent on the ground; but Mr. Lyndon was resolved not to be daunted, and having got the range, reloaded with all speed for another shot.

'No one can dispute your right to feel displeasure towards that lady, or to show it in any way you deem most fitting; but to a mind like Lady Delaunay's, it will not be difficult to conceive, in what a painful position *we* are placed—what a marked slight is put upon our house in the eyes of the world, and more especially our own immediate circle of friends and neighbours—when it is known that so distinguished a member of the family is refused an entrance into her own mother's room. I will say no more; it is not for me to urge such a reason; but I must own I should take it as a real favour, and should leave home with a much easier mind, if your ladyship would permit me to present to you my daughter-in-law and my grandson.'

'Sir,' said Lady Delaunay, after another pause, and a heavy sigh, of whose bitterness he could form but little idea; 'a request urged by you at such a time and in such terms, it is impossible for me to refuse. You will, I trust, do me the justice to distinguish between the natural displeasure I at first felt on the occasion of the marriage, and the subsequent causes of alienation between myself and my daughter. The one might be construed into an affront to your family—the other had no connection with it. I never intended to leave your house without seeing my daughter; but I would gladly have waited till I was equal to entering into such explanations as she might be able to give, and which might have rendered our intercourse more satisfactory to both. But as she is too impatient to wait, and you put it in such a manner as to leave me no choice,

I have only to request it may be done as quickly as is convenient—my strength and nerve not being what they were.’

Mr. Lyndon needed no second hint; he strode triumphantly into the drawing-room, where the family were all awaiting his departure, and laying one hand on Lady Adelaide, and the other on Walter, desired them to come with him directly. In silent amazement they obeyed; he gave them no time to ask questions, but went up-stairs three steps at a time, straight to Lady Delaunay’s door. Then he turned to his daughter-in-law with his grandest smile. ‘Adelaide, my dear, I have obtained permission to lead you and your boy into your mother’s presence. Come in.’

He opened the door, and Adelaide, as if in a dream, crossed the threshold at last.

She saw nothing, heard nothing, save mist, and a rushing sound: but she felt herself drawn on by Mr. Lyndon’s supporting arm, and then that he was putting her hand into that of her mother. The touch recalled her scattered senses—she looked up: Lady Delaunay was standing to receive her, weakness and illness thrown aside as by the power of her will; her shrunken figure drawn up erect, her face composed and austere.

‘Mr. Lyndon has made it a matter of personal favour to himself, and of respect to his family, that I should consent to see you, Adelaide. I owe him and them too much to refuse a first request. We will endeavour to disturb their domestic peace no more with the sight of our unhappy divisions.’

And drawing her daughter forward, she slightly kissed her on the brow, and resumed her seat.

Adelaide neither moved nor spoke; she seemed frozen into a statue. One touch, one word, one look of tenderness—and she would have flung herself on her mother’s bosom, and poured forth the burning tide that swelled her heart almost to suffocation; but that icy tone—that repelling quietness—that regal kiss of courtesy, not of love—spell-bound every impulse, and she stood as a criminal before a judge, drooping, silent, and motionless.

Mr. Lyndon, who had pictured to himself a touching scene of reconciliation, was disappointed, half-inclined to be angry, and rather at a loss how to proceed. After waiting in vain for his daughter-in-law to speak, however he drew Walter forward. ‘My only grandson, Lady Delaunay—mine and *yours*. Let me hope you will never find him unworthy either name.’

‘I trust so,’ said the Countess, looking kindly in Walter’s blushing face, half shy, half defiant. ‘There is no trace of India in those cheeks, Mr. Lyndon; they do credit to your fine moors. What do you mean to be, my little man?’

‘A philosopher, like Sir Humphry Davy and Faraday,’ said Walter.

‘Indeed! you are modest, at any rate. And what do you know of either?’

Walter fidgeted, and looked up to his mamma for help.

‘Indeed, Lady Delaunay,’ said Mr. Lyndon, coming in to the rescue, ‘his knowledge has been rather a dangerous thing sometimes, both to himself and other people; but whatever he has learned, either of science or anything else worth knowing, he owes to his only teacher—his mother.’

Lady Delaunay’s eyes rested for a moment on that mother’s downcast face, and then on that of her boy; it required no small effort to maintain her tranquil ease of manner.

‘I will not question your being a willing pupil, my child, if Davy and Faraday are your models; but have you learned also to be a dutiful and obedient son?’

His eyes filled suddenly. The remembrance of his first rebellion had never left him, and his face grew scarlet as he honestly blurted out, ‘I *did* disobey mamma once; but I was very, *very* sorry.’

His grandmother’s countenance softened strangely.

‘Cherish that sorrow, my boy, and let that one offence be the last; so will you spare yourself and her in after-life the heaviest burden you can bear. God have you in His holy keeping for ever, my grandson!’ she continued, laying her hand on his head. ‘Follow Him as your Father and Guide in your youth, and when you are as old as I am, you will find in Him whatever else you may have lost.’

She bent over him as she spoke, and kissed him with a solemn tenderness that filled him with wonder and awe. He glanced hurriedly at his mother’s face—saw her quivering lip, and the large tears gathering heavily in her drooping eyelids, and with an impulse that broke down all constraint and ceremony, threw his arms impetuously round Lady Delaunay’s neck—whispering so as only she could hear, ‘Oh, grandmamma!—she *is* so sorry too!’

Lady Delaunay’s firmness began to fail; she pressed him to her bosom, in spite of the pain of his energetic hug; and then signed to Mr. Lyndon to take him away. He did not require his grandfather’s shocked look of surprise and rebuke, still less his hint to go; he was so terribly ashamed of what he had just done, that he could not have stayed a minute longer to please anybody, and made but one bolt out of the room, out of the house, and to the remotest corner of the garden; wishing for nothing so much in the whole world, as to be able to hide himself in some hole where nobody would ever find him again! Mr. Lyndon, whose time was nearly up, was beginning something about not intruding any longer, and seemed to expect Adelaide to retire with him; but Lady Delaunay

observing she had a few words to say to her daughter, that would not detain her long, he was too glad to make his bow, and leave them together.

‘I do not wish to intrude upon your private affairs from any idle curiosity,’ said Lady Delaunay, after a short silence, still preserving the cold gentleness with which she had spoken first; ‘but I should be glad to know, if not inconvenient to yourself, how far you are dependent on these kind relations?’

Lady Adelaide tried to answer, but her throat was parched, and the power of utterance seemed gone. Her mother saw this, rose with an effort, and brought her a glass of water. ‘Take your own time,’ she said, quietly; ‘I would rather you did not answer till you are able to command yourself. We have neither of us strength or nerves to spare, and must husband them well. Can you reply to my questions now, or would you rather defer it to another opportunity?’

‘I am ready,’ said Adelaide, calmly. She had recovered in some degree her presence of mind, and was resolved not to give way. Lady Delaunay half turned away from her towards the fire, so as not to embarrass her by her looks, in case, as she secretly dreaded to find, the questions proved difficult to answer.

‘In what circumstances are you left?’

‘The legacy of my uncle Conway——’ she began, reluctantly.

‘That, I am aware, is secured to you; but your own fortune?’

Lady Adelaide was silent: the silence was understood.

‘The interest of that legacy, then, is the main source of your income?’

‘It is.’

‘You bear your part, of course, in the household expenses out of it?’

‘Yes; Mr. Lyndon would not have allowed it, but I insisted.’

‘Perfectly right. But that must leave a small balance for yourself and your child.’ She turned round suddenly, and looked at her as if she would pierce her soul. ‘Tell me at once, what are your debts?’

‘My debts?’ repeated Adelaide, surprised and almost indignant, ‘what makes you suppose——’

‘Stay! hear and understand me before you answer. I dare say you think I am rich; many do—for as of late years I have mixed but little in society, the natural inference would be that I am hoarding my income. I tell you plainly, it is not so. When you left me, the daughter’s portion that would have been yours in time, became a trust; and as a trust I devoted it, partly to recompense the dutiful affection of Charlotte Conway, and the rest to works of mercy among the young and friendless. Such as they are, these

works have become, in their turn, a responsibility. I dare not hold back the support upon which they have been accustomed to depend; I could not, if I would, settle a fortune upon you now. But to free you from the degradation of debt, I would make any other sacrifice that might be necessary. None should ever know it but myself, and I should never allude to it again. Pause, then, and weigh it well; make me your friend by openness, and free yourself *now*,—she paused emphatically on the word, ‘or *never*! Only, as your father’s child, be *true*!’

‘Mother, look at me! Could I meet your eye if I meant to deceive you? Alas! I *did* deceive you once, and that makes you doubt me now. But, thank God, who kept me back from this sorrow among so many, I am without a debt in the world. Say you believe me!’

‘I see,’ said Lady Delaunay, after a brief but keen scrutiny of her earnest features, ‘I have been misinformed. But are you quite sure that there is no obligation—no matter how incurred—probably without your knowledge or sanction, which may hereafter be a burden to your boy, such as he may have no means of shaking off, and will feel it a personal dishonour to bear? Think before you answer, and ask yourself whether an unsullied name be not a heritage worth a little pain to secure for him?’

Adelaide’s eyes dilated; at first with vague consternation, then with a sudden flash of understanding.

‘Mother!’ she whispered, hoarsely, ‘who has dared to poison your mind like this?’

The Countess looked up in haughty surprise.

‘Who is it,’ repeated Adelaide, advancing a step nearer, ‘that has made you think my husband was a dishonoured gambler? Speak!’

Eye to eye their bright glances met; and Lady Delaunay read her own spirit in that of her daughter. She turned away without a direct reply, merely observing, ‘Since this is the tone in which the conversation is to be carried on, we will, if you please, close it at once.’

‘Oh, no, no!’ said Adelaide, sinking on one knee before her, and pressing her mother’s dress to her lips, ‘forgive me—bear with me a little longer!—say what you will, believe what you will of *me*—but, just and noble as you are, spare *him* whom you never knew; whose only fault towards you was loving me too well; who left me but two precious charges to shield with my life—his child, and his good name!’

Lady Delaunay leaned back in her chair, trembling and well-nigh overcome.

‘Your rebuke would be more just,’ she said, presently, ‘had I

intended anything but a real service. Still, you are right, and in this also I have been misled—strangely so,’ she added, putting her hand to her head, as a vague but terrible suspicion began to dawn upon her; such as had arisen once before, and been repelled as an injustice. The sudden change of countenance alarming her daughter, she rose to offer her support; but this Lady Delaunay’s lifted finger gently but decidedly declined.

‘One thing more,’ she said, in a faint voice, ‘and then I will release you, and try to rest. You mentioned your boy; what are you doing about his education?’

‘It has been my wish to send him to school, when my own plans were arranged; but nothing has been decided yet, on account of——’

‘Of want of means, perhaps? It seems to cost you a great deal to own it.’

‘It does, at this moment,’ said Adelaide, with difficulty suppressing her tears.

‘That obstacle shall be removed; education is a matter of right, not of favour, and the loss of a year at his age is not easily repaired. But you have plans; may I ask what they are? You hesitate. Are you afraid or ashamed of being open with me?’

‘No, no, my dearest mother,’ faltered Lady Adelaide, once more kneeling at her feet, and venturing this time to lay her hand on hers, ‘I only hesitated because I have now no plans—no wish—but to obey you in all things, and know no will but yours!’

‘And if,’ said Lady Delaunay, neither encouraging nor repulsing her, ‘I were to take you at your word—what, after all I have told you, do you hope to receive from me?’

Adelaide bowed her head on her mother’s knee to hide the tears that would no longer be kept back. ‘If not your love—if not your confidence—at least one such blessing as you gave my boy!’

For a moment her mother’s hand was suspended above her, as if it yearned to bestow it even then; but stern resolution prevailed, and when Lady Delaunay spoke, her voice betrayed little of what she really felt.

‘Be it so, Adelaide; I accept your obedience on trial; and you shall have full opportunity to prove your sincerity. My trust once shaken, I tell you again, and frankly, it is by *actions*, not by words, that it is to be restored. Rise now, and leave me; and let the future atone for the past.’

The tone was decisive; Adelaide rose submissively, and retired without another word. Emma, full of anxious sympathy, was waiting to meet her in the passage. She saw in a moment how it was, even before she spoke.

‘Do not ask me, Emma, or I shall break down. Yes, I have seen her, spoken to her, been kissed by her; and I know as well as

if she had told me, that she will never love me again. It is too late.'

Emma tried to cheer her with the recollection that the worst was over; she had now a chance of winning back what she had lost, and every step gained was an encouragement to hope and trust for more.

'So it is, and I will try, as well as I can. I have not deserved even this; but oh, Emma! that quiet coldness—I understand it so well—it makes a coward of me. Once in my childhood, I had an outbreak of passionate rebellion, and stood out against her a whole day. When night came, I was subdued and repentant, and she told me she forgave me, but she should decide in the morning what my punishment should be. To this day I have not forgotten the terror in which I lay through the long dark hours, wondering what the morning would bring; I have that terror strong upon me now. That there is some trial in store to test my powers of submission and compliance, I can read in every look, I can hear in every tone. Whatever it is, God give me strength to bear it, for I shall never resist her again. I am in her hands, and she may do with me what she will.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

No, 'tis slander;  
Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue  
Out-venoms all the worms of Nile.—*Shakespeare.*

THE agitation of these two last days had a visible effect in retarding Lady Delaunay's recovery; instead of coming down-stairs and planning how to proceed on her journey, as she had confidently expected, she lost some of the ground already gained, and her nurses were glad of the additional help Lady Adelaide was now permitted to give. Emma had thus many opportunities of observing how matters stood between mother and daughter, and hardly knew what to think. Certainly, the coldness which Adelaide had felt so strongly, instead of diminishing, appeared to increase. Lady Delaunay, in her intervals of ease, would converse with the other ladies cheerfully and agreeably, fascinating them by her power of conversation and store of anecdote; but to her daughter, though constantly present, she seldom spoke at all, except to thank her occasionally for her services, or to beg her to spare herself unnecessary fatigue. The distinction made was so painfully marked, as to distress them all; and the consciousness of its being thus observed added tenfold to the difficulty Lady Adelaide found in taking it patiently. A little while ago, to be in that room at all, had appeared a privilege that would compensate

for everything else ; but two days of this treatment made her begin to doubt whether it was not more trying than anything she had borne yet.

To be so near, and yet so wide apart—to see her smile on strangers, and pass her over as unworthy of notice—to be reminded every hour that she was only there on sufferance and probation—to receive those polite thanks for what she did, but never one loving glance or word—and all this before others, whose very pity took an irritating form—was, indeed, a sharp trial of a spirit so high and impulsive. But genuine contrition for the past made her accept it as a punishment deserved ; without making any further attempts at conciliation, or testifying any resentment, she tacitly acquiesced in her sentence ; performing every permitted service, and submitting to every galling slight, with a quiet patience, that was not without dignity ; nor, as far as her own peace of mind went, even then without reward.

She could not see—but Emma did, and it helped her to hope and to understand—how, when she believed herself unnoticed, those earnest, searching eyes would gradually settle upon her, as their natural object ; marking the changes wrought by time on the once familiar image—noting the womanly grace of outline—the thoughtful cast of features, over which anxiety and grief had of late thrown a delicacy, betraying wasted strength, without impairing their loveliness—resting there sometimes with the grave compassion of a judge, sometimes with the stern admiration of an adversary—sometimes, Emma thought, with such a look as Joseph might have worn, when he turned from his humbled brethren and wept, and then—took *Simeon*, and bound him before their eyes.

It was on the afternoon of the third day after Mr. Lyndon's departure, that Lady Delaunay, feeling herself so much better as to give hopes of her soon leaving her room, expressed a wish for Walter's company ; and that young gentleman, in spite of much rebellion and concealment, was compelled to go in and do his best to be agreeable. Happily, it never took long to set him at his ease ; his grandmamma's kindness soon dispelled his awe, and that once gone, his tongue speedily began to rattle. There was no one else present but his mother, who sat at work, as usual, a little apart ; looking very pale and quiet, and decidedly, he thought, as if she wanted amusing. So encouraged by Lady Delaunay's indulgence, he launched out into all his favourite stories and projects—probing her scientific knowledge without scruple, and making a very liberal display of his own ; little aware of the effect he was producing on one, at least, of his hearers. But the truth was, the strain of the last few days had begun to tell on Lady Adelaide's nerves, and she was feeling just then so tired and out of spirits,



that the smallest additional burden was too much to bear. Her boy's prattle, which at any other time she could have tolerated, if she could not exactly enjoy, now oppressed and fatigued her; for she was in constant nervous expectation of his saying or alluding to something that would displease or pain. When he chattered about his tastes and studies, she felt as if she had taught him nothing, and that his grandmother was observing it; his very laugh jarred her ear, as if it were a cruel derision of her anxiety: and when at last it came to 'dear old Brown John's stories about India and mamma,' she could bear it no longer. Interrupting him with an abruptness very unlike her ordinary manner, she told him he was only tiring his grandmamma, and if he talked so much, he must be sent out of the room. In his surprise at such a rebuke he hardly knew what to say; and Lady Delaunay, signing to him to stay where he was, looked at her daughter for an explanation. As none was given, she observed, quietly, 'He is not tiring *me*—on the contrary; but as I am afraid it is too much for you, pray do not let us detain you any longer in this room.'

It was the overflowing drop in the full cup. Lady Adelaide put down her work, rose hastily, seemed on the point of speaking, but instead of doing so, hurried to the door; not so quickly but that Lady Delaunay could see how the blood started from her compressed lip, and the burning glow that spread over her face. She shaded her own with her hand for a moment, and then, making Walter sit down at her feet, encouraged him, while her fingers played caressingly with his thick curls, to talk away as much as he pleased, which was no stinted licence. Once fairly launched on the subject of his mamma, Walter never knew how to stop, and thanks to Brown John's reminiscences and his own, he had plenty to tell of which his auditor had never dreamed; while the glimpses so unconsciously given of the character so long misrepresented—the resolution, patience, self-devotion, and courage displayed under circumstances that fully tested their truth, brought a glow of pride to the mother's cheek and heart, such as she had thought she could feel no more.

But Adelaide, meanwhile, conscious of nothing but the peril she had so narrowly escaped, fled to the first quiet corner she could find, and panted for breath like a hunted deer. Hardly aware how much bodily weariness and irritation had to do with it, she could only feel that she had been within a hair's breadth of losing her self-control, and of retorting in the bitterness of the moment, what she could never have recalled—or have forgiven herself for uttering, even if her mother could. And if this had been the case, when they had only been three days together, how could she feel secure, that the next impulse might not prove too strong, or too

sudden, even for escape? A yearning for comfort and advice, even if accompanied by reproof, made her resolve to try and find Doctor Home, whom, since the day of the poor woman's death, she had only seen for a few minutes in the presence of others. She was just on her way to her room to equip for the walk, when an excited maid came running after her, to announce there were three ladies in the parlour who had called to see Lady Delaunay. Miss Lyndon was out, and Miss Lucy hoped she would be so good as to go and speak to them.

In no small wonder, she complied at once, and was greeted by one of the longest-drawn curtsseys she had ever seen in her life; the skirts of the visitor crackling during the operation like a Christmas fire, and her whole toilette and bearing elaborately expressive of the profound sense of the reverence due to rank.

'Lady Adelaide Lyndon I believe I have the honour of addressing,' said this lady, with a second edition of the curtsy, enlarged and improved, to the great increase of Lady Adelaide's astonishment at her mother's visitor, though she was too well-bred to let it appear. A quick glance at the other strangers, while she was requesting them to be seated, told her there was some broad line of demarcation between them and the head of the party; as the taller of the two was plainly dressed, and the younger, her face covered with a brown veil, her clothes rumpled and dusty, as if she had been travelling in a *diligence* for thirty-eight hours, kept her head down, and looked the very picture of helpless misery and despair.

'I have taken the liberty of calling, Lady Adelaide,' said the first lady, as soon as they were seated, 'not to intrude on the Countess Delaunay, of whose accident and illness I heard with feelings of the deepest regret and alarm, but simply in the discharge of my duty. My name,' handing a card to Lady Adelaide, with a low bend of the head, 'may not be entirely unknown to your ladyship, who has honoured this neighbourhood with your presence now for some little time. Your ladyship is probably aware that the Countess did me the honour of visiting the College of which I am the Principal, a few days ago?'

Lady Adelaide, not deeming it necessary to say it was the first she had heard of it, bowed politely, and waited to know—what then?

'Lady Delaunay, madam, was in a state of distressing anxiety respecting a young lady in whom she felt great interest, and who had been guilty of the unpardonable ingratitude and imprudence of withdrawing from her protection, and plunging her generous and distinguished friends into all the distress and anxiety consequent on such a step. Her ladyship, with the acuteness of a powerful

mind, traced the fugitive to my unpretending but cheerful abode (where instruction and improvement walk hand in hand), but too late to arrest her flight. She had only remained for a brief period, and unaware of the circumstances, I had no reason for detaining her. To-day, however, she came to me again; and deeply impressed with a sense of what is due to the Countess Delaunay, I felt it my duty not to suffer her to quit my custody, till I had restored her to that of her noble protectress, by whom her fate may be decided.'

There was a pause; Lady Adelaide looked at the other two, and at once perceived which was the culprit, for she dropped her head on the table, and hid her face in her arms. The elder, who had watched Lady Adelaide from her first entrance with the keenest curiosity, laughed at this, and tried to raise her companion from her forlorn attitude. 'Look up, Lilla! whatever Lady Delaunay may think of your *escapade*, this lady is the last who will be hard upon you, if all be true that people say.' And she gave Lady Adelaide a sarcastic look, that, unprovoked as it was, astounded her not a little.

'Who is *this* young lady, may I ask?' she inquired, with a slight touch of haughtiness in the manner of the question, that mightily impressed the Principal.

'I beg your ladyship's pardon for not presenting Miss Unwin, one of the lady assistants in the College, herself a *protégée* of the Countess, whose liberality in her education will, I trust, be rewarded by the unlimited benefit showered on the rising generation of this popular neighbourhood.'

Lady Adelaide's eyes met Miss Unwin's, and the latter immediately answered the look. 'Yes; I have had the happiness of being under Lady Delaunay's care; and if your ladyship wishes to give her pleasure, you have only to mention Belle Unwin, and assure her she will never forget what she owes her, especially for her goodness on the day she left her house!'

'How dare you, Belle?' interrupted Lilla Brittan, starting from her depressed attitude, 'how *can* you be so wicked?' Then at the sound of her own voice, and seeing Lady Adelaide's surprise, she covered her face again and burst into tears.

'You see how it is, madam,' said the Principal, shaking her head. 'This unfortunate young lady is not fit to be trusted to herself, and in my responsible position as the head of a respectable, and, I may say, fashionable Academy, it would be out of the question for me to undertake the charge of her—unless, indeed, at the express request of the Countess Delaunay, and under peculiar regulations I have done my duty in delivering her safely to her friends, and I leave the rest now in your ladyship's hands, to do as you may think

proper. I trust the Countess Delaunay will approve what I have thought right and fitting to do.'

'But,' interposed Lady Adelaide, not a little embarrassed, 'my mother, as you are aware, is too unwell to be applied to just now; I dare not run any risk of exciting her——'

'Certainly, madam; your ladyship must know best; I have discharged my duty, and hope for her ladyship's approval as my reward. Should the Countess Delaunay feel disposed to place her young friend under my care, she will meet with all the advantages of a finished education, combined with the refined endearments of a home. I believe your ladyship has my card. I will take the liberty of adding a copy of the Prospectus and Rules. Miss Unwin, we are trespassing on Lady Adelaide Lyndon's valuable time. I have the honour to wish your ladyship good afternoon. *Good afternoon!*'

And with another prolonged curtsey, gracefully turned off into a sweeping glide, she skilfully accomplished her retreat. Before Miss Unwin, however, had made many steps in the same direction, she came back, and stood looking full in Lady Adelaide's face.

'I don't know why I was insolent to you—I beg your pardon.'

'It is granted,' said Lady Adelaide, mildly. Her strange visitor caught her hand, kissed it, and let it go.

'Yes, I beg your pardon, and I am glad that silly child is in your hands: try and help her, if you can, and don't let Lady Delaunay make of her the miserable wretch she has made of me, of whom, at one moment, a merciful word would have made her slave for life! Whose I am now, she neither knows nor cares, perhaps; but some day she will, and you may tell her from me, she never did half as much good in all her years of charity, as she did harm to me that day!'

She dashed out of the room before she could be detained, and the vehicle that brought them was heard immediately after grinding the gravel as it moved away.

Lady Adelaide, sorely perplexed by this new and unexpected charge, turned to look at her prisoner. She had flung herself down on the rug, with her face buried on her knees, rocking herself to and fro with sobs of such deep misery as would have touched a much harder heart than that of Adelaide Lyndon. As gently as she could, she endeavoured to persuade her to rise and explain, but for some time to no purpose; her soothing voice and manner, however, had the effect of stilling the stormy sobs, and Lilla at last ventured to look up. The pity expressed in the beautiful face gave her heart; she clasped Lady Adelaide's knees imploringly.

'You look kind and good—yes, you do; and I will tell you the whole truth, and do whatever you bid me; but don't please, please

don't give me up to Lady Delaunay ! I know she will never forgive me, after all this ; and if she takes me back to London, and shames me before everybody as she did Belle Unwin, I shall die, I know I shall. And she will either do that, or something worse. Miss Conway says she *never* forgives ; and she said herself, when she punished at all, she punished in earnest, and it frightens me. Oh, do help me to go away to service, or to teach, or anything that is honest and will give me bread—I don't care what, only don't keep me for her to see, pray—*pray* don't !'

The young childish face, streaming with tears, and disfigured with grief, dust, and fatigue, was more than Lady Adelaide could bear to see ; and finding she would not be raised, she sat down, and let her head rest on her lap, taking off her battered bonnet, and parting the tangled hair from the hot forehead and swollen eyes.

'My poor child,' she said, in a tone full of pity, 'I have no right and no wish to force you into anything ; but you have been left in my hands, and though it is but little I have in my power, I will do the best I can for you, if you will trust yourself to me.'

'Oh, yes, I will ! I love your face already. You will not be like Miss Conway, will you ? You will not pet and cosset me one minute, and set everybody against me the next, I am sure. I will trust you in everything.'

'Then tell me who you are, and what you have been doing ; for at present I am quite in the dark.'

Lilla choked her sobs, and in as few words as she could, told her tale. Her flight had been one continued series of terrors and disappointments ; when Belle Unwin refused to help her, she had gone on with the good-natured farmer, because she knew not where else to go, and his wife kept her two days, while she was trying to hear of some situation, and when she told her she could stay there no longer, she had gone on to the next town in hopes of finding something to do ; but her money was nearly gone, and nobody liked to have anything to do with her. She had no idea what a dreadful thing it was to go about by oneself, till she came to try. She took a lodging, and the woman seemed to think she was not respectable, and made her pay a week's rent in advance, and she had to sell some of her clothes ; and she tried to get needlework at a large outfitting shop, but they would not employ her without a reference ; so she made her way back to the College to ask Belle Unwin ; and directly she appeared, the Principal locked her into a room by herself, and then, in spite of all her entreaties, brought her here.

'And it was on *your* account, then,' said Lady Adelaide, when she paused, 'to find you out, and bring you back, that my mother took this journey ?'

'Yes, I suppose so. I had no idea she would.'

The tears stood in Adelaide's eyes. 'How she must love you !

Lilla looked up in wonder, struck by her tone. 'I had not thought of that.'

'Think of it *now*, then. Think of what she has done for you—of the anxiety you must have given her, of the pain and illness of which you have unwittingly been the cause—and then decide, whether you will not rather bear whatever she may think right, than persist in grieving and harassing so dear and affectionate a friend ?'

'Will you speak for me, then, and tell her how sorry I am ?'

'I, my poor child ? I would not do you so ill a service. If she still loves you, you need nothing more ; and instead of pitying—' the bitterness of heart that would not be restrained, made her hurry on, unmindful of the effect of her words,—'I could envy you—yes, and the poorest and most afflicted of those, among whom she pours out so freely that precious love, denied to none—but me !'

Lilla Brittan half raised herself, and looked eagerly in her face, almost forgetting her own misfortunes in the interest suddenly awakened. Many words and circumstances, to which she had hardly attended at the time, returned forcibly now to her remembrance, and she began to understand them better. Whatever she was going to say, however, was effectually stopped by a sudden giddiness from long fasting and excitement, which seized her directly she attempted to rise ; so that she was only saved from falling full length on the rug by Lady Adelaide catching her in her arms. Somehow, this struck her as being so palpably ludicrous, that she burst out laughing ; and then, because she laughed, felt shocked at herself ; and the more amazed Lady Adelaide looked at this unexpected revulsion of spirits, the more ashamed she grew, and the more she laughed, till the tears again ran down her cheeks, hardly dry from the last. It was not till her companion had forced her into her chair, and was moving towards the door, that she recovered sufficient voice to gasp out a sort of apology and explanation, that she was only horridly silly, that was all ; was she going away offended ?

'No ; I am only going to see what can be done for you ; if you will keep quiet till I come back. I do not wish to lock the door—can I trust you on parole ?'

'I won't stir from this chair without your leave,' said Lilla ; and as the laughter had exhausted the little strength she had left, it seemed probable she would keep her word. Lady Adelaide hastened up to the nursery, by courtesy so called ; where, as she expected, she found Emma playing with the little one, and her small maid making tea.

'Oh, I am so glad you are come !' was her first greeting ; 'here has this little monkey been so full of antics, nobody can manage

her but you. See, she knows her playfellow directly ; I can hardly hold her.'

'Her playfellow has her hands full just now,' said Adelaide, unable, however, to resist the temptation, and forgetting weariness of limbs or of heart, as she caught the laughing child, and allowed her to perform her favourite piece of mischief, of pulling down her small lace cap, and a mass of dark hair along with it. 'Be so kind, nurse, as to pour me out a cup of tea, and cut some good slices of bread and butter, will you?'

'Certainly, my lady,' said nurse, somewhat astonished, but with a reverential curtsy ; for she held Lady Adelaide in the profoundest admiration and awe, treasuring up every word that fell from her lips, for the future annihilation of her compeers in London. While she bustled off to fetch a tray and cup and saucer, Adelaide explained to Emma what was going on.

'That accounts for the uneasy state in which your mother has been so often, and which I could not make out. She has dropped hints about a task left unfinished, and what she must do as soon as she was strong enough, which I now see referred to this. What can you do for the poor girl?'

'I cannot keep her here ; there is no bed to spare, and the report of her being in the house might startle my mother suddenly. I think, as soon as she has had some refreshment, I shall take her to the rectory, and beg Dr. Home to receive her till we know what is best to be done.'

'You cannot do better,' said Emma, 'if the walk is not too much—you are looking very tired. I was in hopes you were resting, as Walter and his grandmamma, when I peeped in just now, seemed to be growing friends as fast as you and little Emma. How can you let her pull your hair so?'

'There, good-bye, my little Emma,' said Adelaide, shaking her off with a parting kiss, and rearranging her head-gear as best she might. 'If I never had a heavier load to bear, or a harder hand to deal with, I should be much better off than I deserve.'

And in spite of 'nurse's' remonstrances and entreaties, away she went with her tray.

Lilla Brittan was rather ashamed to find herself so waited upon ; and not a little dismayed to hear she was to go to a clergyman's house. She had a vague dread of she knew not what, but it seemed made up of being lectured, made to read sermons, and having to teach in a Sunday-school what she did not know herself. Above all, she was sure she should laugh when she ought not, and be thought a heathen at once. However, Lady Adelaide reassured her in some degree, and as soon as she had finished her welcome refreshment, did her best to tidy her appearance,

straightening and wiping the crushed, dusty bonnet, and smoothing the disordered braids of hair, so as to make her look rather less forlorn than when she came.

‘Where is your luggage, my dear—or have you none?’

‘It was put in the hall,’ was the answer; and sure enough, there was an unsightly-looking bundle, at which Lady Adelaide shook her head. ‘I will send that down to the Rectory afterwards, when we have ascertained if you can be received there. Do you feel rested enough to come at once?’

‘I feel quite another creature.’

‘Then try and act like one in future.’ And her own toilette being speedily performed, they set out forthwith; Adelaide wishing, especially, to escape a discussion with Lucy or Penelope.

When they came within sight of the Rectory, Miss Lyndon was just turning away from it. Adelaide immediately entered the churchyard to avoid her, without noticing how reluctantly her companion followed. The instant they passed the wicket, the bell began to toll. Lilla crept to Lady Adelaide’s side, and took her arm nervously.

‘A funeral, my dear, so we shall not be able to speak to the rector just yet. Do you mind waiting?’

‘Oh no! but it sounds so dismal. I cannot bear to hear a bell toll—I never could. Oh, look, there is the grave ready dug, and an old man sitting by it. Do come away!’

‘I must speak to him first,’ said Lady Adelaide, and she went up to the stone on which the old man was seated, and touched him on the arm. He looked up with a start, and made his salute in silence.

‘I did not expect to find you here, sergeant.’

He pointed to the grave. ‘Her bed is ready, and she’ll sleep there as sound as she did under my roof. Man’s breath, and woman’s, which is worse, can harm her no longer, let them call her what they will. That bell lets no tongue be heard but its own; it gets the last word, and keeps it.’

‘Is she to be buried to-day? I had almost forgotten; I have had so much to think of. How is her poor mother?’

‘God help her, for she needs help. She don’t seem to find her goodness much comfort; she’d give ten years of her life to put ten minutes’ breath into that poor thing’s body, who might have died like a dog long ago, for all she did to save her. Ay, my lady, death is a grand purifier! Those whom folks wouldn’t touch at arm’s length before, they would carry in their bosoms then. Their faults look so little when it is too late to forgive them; and ours, when it is too late to own them, grow up so wondrous big!’

Lady Adelaide made no answer, but stood looking thoughtfully down upon the dark and narrow bed.



'There are some now,' he went on, 'as wouldn't have let that poor soul darken their doors if she had asked it on her knees—directly she's gone, they come and ask all about her, and what they can do; and one sends a bit, and another sends a bit, that nobody wants or asks for—and they want to be doing this, and that, and the other, and not a hard word to be had among 'em all! Ay, but *he's* a grand peacemaker. Charity covers a multitude of sins, they say; but he does more, for he *buries* 'em.'

'There is comfort in that, at least,' said Lady Adelaide, still gazing wistfully into the empty grave.

'So there is, my lady. Maybe, when I am lying hereabouts, as I should like to be, and you pass me on your way to church, you will give me a kind look now and then, and nobody think the worse of you for it, though they have abused you often enough, I know, for being so good to such an old heathen now.'

'Ah, sergeant, I should care very little for what any one said, if I could only think I had any influence over you.'

He looked half inclined to resent the imputation, but she went on, before he could interrupt her. 'If I could only see you go to church too—only hope you were turning to God *now*—the only Friend who can make this last bed one of rest for either of us—'

'Stop, my lady; I just ask you this: what will He care for the ashes and cinders of a life that was promised to Him years ago, when it was worth having, and never paid Him yet?'

The bell tolled again before she could answer; the funeral was seen slowly approaching; it was not the moment, even if she could have found voice, to pour out the arguments with which her heart was full; she could only point once more to the church with a look of earnest entreaty, and say, 'Try Him—and see!'

To her surprise, he looked up in her face, and a softened change came over his own. 'God bless those eyes of yours—so I *will*.'

There was no time for more; Lady Adelaide was obliged to hasten back to her young companion, to avoid appearing intrusive on the grief of the mother, who led the little girl by the hand.

'If you are too tired, or unwilling to stand here, Miss Brittan, will you wait for me in the vestry?'

'Oh, no; don't leave me by myself. I don't mind so long as I am with you. How very gloomy all this is! Who are they going to bury?'

'A woman who did wrong when she was young, and repented; but for want of a friend just in time, fell into evil again, and consequently into misery and disease.'

'Oh, Lady Adelaide!' Lilla's eyes filled, and she clung to her, and said no more.

And now the rector in his surplice came out to meet the burden

borne through the lych-gate ; and his deep voice began the glorious words with which the service opens—words, that to some of those who heard sounded as mysteriously new as when they were first spoken in Bethany.

Earth to earth—ashes to ashes—dust to dust. The outcast had found a refuge, and the houseless a home ; and she who when living had been shunned as an inmate, the Church laid to rest as a dear sister departed. And as the heavy clouds fell on the humble coffin, there was not one of those who witnessed that was not more or less moved. The rector himself, not at all given to betraying feeling on these occasions, had some difficulty in completing the service, and his spectacles grew so dim, it was well he had it tolerably by heart. Lilla Brittan, impulsive and excitable at all times, leaned all her weight on her companion's arm, and sobbed as she thought of her father and mother. Over Adelaide's melancholy the solemn words stole like a gale of healing, as though it were a voice from her home in the far-off land, where the wanderer is welcome and the weary are at rest. What, after all, were the troubles and sorrows of this life, but the light affliction for a moment—for which strength was given when sought—out of which mercy was ever ready to spring—and whose eternal consolation was at hand, even at the doors ? It was just the refreshment she had needed, giving her the strength her day's burden required, at the moment when her own was gone.

Little did she know how much she would require, before that day was over.

No one appeared to notice them where they stood ; they saw the rector, when all was over, go up to Mrs. Dalton and her grandchild, and press them, as it seemed, to rest in his house ; nor was it till most of those whom curiosity or better motives had brought to the spot, had withdrawn, that he discovered who was waiting. Then he came forward with extended hand, looking, Lady Adelaide thought, less cheerful than usual ; but for that the solemnity of the scene might account. His kindness was as hearty as ever, and as soon as he heard her difficulty, he was prompt in his offered assistance ; thanking her for letting him be useful, and trying to make his unexpected guest feel she was doing him and his grand-daughter the greatest favour imaginable. Still, he was not quite like himself, and more than once seemed to find it difficult to command his attention to what was told him ; so that Lady Adelaide, at last, ventured gently to express her fear that she was harassing him with her troubles, when he, perhaps, had enough of his own. He squeezed her hand tight, and as they moved slowly on, answered in some agitation, ' No, no, you do not harass me at all ; but it is very true—we all have our turn ; I *am* in trouble just now, though

I cannot explain it. It is good for us all now and then—makes us feel for each other. Ah, I have felt a good deal for *you*--prayed for you, too, my dear, though I did walk off from you so uncivilly that day. Ousel told me what had happened, and I thought you would never get home if you knew; but I could not have gone with you without letting it out, if my life had depended upon it. Well, I won't ask questions; I know it will all come right in time; we must have patience; we are all as blind as owls in the daytime, and cannot see a step before us; and so all we can do is just to follow the Guide who *can*.'

He gave a great sigh as he said this, and then, in a more indifferent tone, asked if they had heard from Henry yet? No—his wife expected a letter that day. Ah, she did, did she? If there was any particular news, would it be too much trouble to send and let him know? Lady Adelaide promised to do so when she sent Miss Brittan's clothes.

'I hope she will not be too great a tax upon you, sir; it is a real act of Christian charity to give her shelter.'

'Supposing it to be so (which I do not allow), you and Sergeant Wade have set too good an example not to be followed. What do you think he asked me just now? If I would promise he should be buried in the corner there, close to poor Mrs. Smith and Brown John. He chose the spot for her, and now hankers after it himself. I sometimes hope there is light in eventide yet reserved for him, after all. Ah, Mrs. Ball!' as a brisk figure, baby in arms, suddenly stood curtsying in his path; 'I thought I saw you just now; this *is* being kind and neighbourly, to show a mark of respect to a stranger, especially such a poor one.'

'Well, indeed, sir, as to that poor body, when I saw what a decent, respectable mother she had, there was nothing I wouldn't ha' done for her, I'm sure—nor Jem either, if it comes to that.'

'Take a lesson, then, Mrs. Ball, and do what you can for your neighbours, not when they do *not* want it, but when they *do*. And now, as you have brought that little one into the churchyard, when are you going to bring her to be received into the congregation, as a Christian child should?'

'Bless its heart, and that's what I wanted to ask you, when the good gentleman was likely to be back; he's the godfather, you know, sir, and it wouldn't be respectful not to wait for him.'

The rector's face twitched as if a sharp pang had shot through it. 'Don't wait for him—I am sure he would rather you did not; but there—you shall hear. Good-bye.' But Mrs. Ball was not so easily got rid of, when disposed for conversation.

'Won't her ladyship please to look at the baby, as she saved its life? She is thriving and well, my lady, and feels her feet

already, thanks to your goodness, though it's little thanks you got at the time, to my shame and sorrow, as Jem has thrown in my teeth ever since !'

Lady Adelaide paid the expected tribute to the child's good looks, and asked its name—an innocent question enough, but it astounded Mrs. Ball, and made the rector shrug his shoulders with a smile.

'Well, to be sure, my lady, and didn't you know, when Mr. Randolph, his own self, quite out of his own head, called her *Adelaide*. He did, indeed, my lady, and proud we all are that his godchild should be your namesake too !'

'There,' said Dr. Home, with a side glance at her face, when their loquacious acquaintance had at last allowed them to pass ; 'that was rather a surprise for you, was it not ? Ah, my dear, I could surprise you still more, but I won't. You have enough to think of just now, without that. Only if you do hear any news in the course of the day, you won't forget to send to me, will you ? Come, Miss Brittan, welcome to the Rectory, and let us see how soon we can make you feel at home.'

It was now past five o'clock, but as it was a standing rule at the Manorhouse, whenever Mr. Lyndon was away, for the ladies to dine early and indulge in an elaborate tea, Lady Adelaide thought she should have time just to go to the village shop for some articles Walter had wanted in a most particular hurry that afternoon, and which he would otherwise not be able to get till tomorrow. The said shop having one slight peculiarity in its otherwise faultless arrangements, that the article you asked for was invariably the last that could be found, if it was found at all ; it was rather later than she expected when she turned her face homewards, her pocket stored with such elegant trifles as string, tin-tacks, and glue. A most unexpected pleasure was in store for her, however, before her walk was ended ; for just as she passed Mr. Spindler's gate, that gentleman stepped out of it.

'My Lady Adelaide Lyndon herself ! How extremely fortunate, and how singular ! The very last person I was thinking of, and the one I most wished to see. I hope your ladyship is pretty well again ? I was on my way to the Manorhouse this very moment, to inquire after your health, and that of the Countess Delaunay.'

The distant civility with which this was received did not seem to disconcert him at all ; he planted himself in her way, so that she could not hurry past, without more rudeness than she had at her command.

'It is doubly fortunate that I have met you, my lady, because I have something very particular to say to you on business ; and it will save time and trouble if you would please to step in for a few minutes, instead of my going on with you to the Manorhouse.'

'If you will be good enough, sir, to explain to what business you refer, I may be better able to decide. I am not aware of any in which I am concerned, that you need trouble yourself about at all.'

'No, my lady, perhaps not. I did not say you were personally concerned in this, but it may interest you, notwithstanding. I have brought you a note from Mr. Lyndon.'

He handed it to her with a bow and a smile. She opened it with trembling hands—read the scarcely legible scrawl—and looked at him in consternation. His small eyes glittered as they met hers, like the Lady Geraldine's in 'Christabel.' 'Well, my lady! when are you disposed to go into this little matter—and where?'

'Now, sir—wherever you please.' He set his gate wide open immediately, and as she passed through, bowed again with an air of triumph she was too oppressed to heed. No hunter who has ridden on the tracks of a noble quarry, mile after mile, ever approached within distance with a wilder throb of mingled hope and fear, than he felt at the moment he saw her enter his house.

It was so much later than usual, when Lady Adelaide reached home, that Lucy, who had long been on the watch, flew to meet her in the hall; too full of her own troubles to notice the expression of her sister-in-law's face.

'Oh, my dear, I am so thankful you are come at last! No end of troubles! Somebody has stopped a banker, with ever so much of my father's money—I thought nobody did such things now—and what is to become of us all, I am sure I can't say, except to go out as governesses, or distressed needlewomen, or I don't know what. Penny will tell you all about it; but you must run now directly to your mother's room; she asked for you some time ago, and I don't know what is the matter, only that it must be something very serious, for she will not speak to any one else.'

Adelaide stood still for a moment, grasping the baluster for support, before ascending the stairs; and in that moment, as she bowed her head, breathed a prayer for courage. There was no time to collect her thoughts—whatever the fresh trial, it must be encountered; and as she was hastening upstairs, she found Emma coming to meet her, looking unusually anxious and grave. She told her Lady Delaunay had received a letter which had evidently given her a great shock, but as she had begged to be left alone, till her daughter came back, they had not ventured to intrude.

'I have been listening, and can hear no sound of any kind. You had better take your things off first, and then go in as gently as you can; she may be asleep; and at any rate, to appear as if you were flurried or alarmed, would be the worst thing you could do.'

Lady Adelaide followed her advice; but when she opened the door she was very much startled by her mother's attitude. She

sat by the fire; her eyes fixed straight before her—the hand in which the letter was tightly held, hanging stiffly over the arm of the chair—her features pinched, and her body bent, but rigid and motionless. Alarmed, but without losing her presence of mind, Adelaide approached, and placed herself where she could be seen, but the fixed eyeballs never moved;—she addressed her by name—there was no answer, or sign of hearing. She knelt, and kissed the cold, damp hand, chafing it gently in her own, till it began to relax its hold, and the letter slipped from her fingers. The instant it did so, she gave a convulsed start and shiver, and seemed struggling for breath. Her daughter gave her restoratives, and watched with no small anxiety the gradual return of a more life-like tint to her cheek and lips, and a more natural expression to her features. What could have brought on this alarming attack she had not time then to conjecture, but her thankfulness when she saw it pass away is not to be told. Lady Delaunay sighed heavily several times, and her eyes closed as if exhausted; when they opened again, their stony glare was gone.

‘Who is here?—who is holding me?’ she asked, feebly, finding herself lying back in some one’s arms, whose face she could not see.

‘I am here, my dear mother—no one else.’

‘Is that Adelaide? Ah! poor child—poor child!’

The tone was so full of sorrowful pity, it nearly overcame Lady Adelaide’s self-command; but she knew the risk, and only ventured to press one long, gentle kiss on the white hair that rested on her bosom.

Again the faint voice murmured dreamily, as if unconscious of a listener.

‘So young as she was, why should she have kept it from me? Perhaps it was my fault—and yet I was never severe with her, never; and so young to deceive—sixteen—only sixteen!’

Her eyes closed heavily, and she gradually sank into a quiet sleep in her daughter’s arms. The position in which Lady Adelaide half-stood, half-leaned, was far from being an easy one, and the exertion of preserving it soon made the large drops of fatigue gather fast on her brow; but the sleep was too precious to be endangered by the slightest movement, and she remained perfectly still, till the Countess awoke with a sudden start, and sat up—recollection and horror returning equally clear in a moment. The room had grown rather dark, except from the flicker of the firelight, and she did not distinguish at first who was attending on her. The tone in which she asked, ‘Is that *you*, Adelaide?’ was very different from the last; different indeed from her usual manner, for it was sharp and quick.

‘A light, a light, this moment!’

Adelaide obeyed as quickly as she could.

‘The letter—I had a letter ; where is it ?’

She picked it up, and gave it to her, more terrified now than she had been yet ; though she hardly knew why, except that she had never seen her mother so unlike herself. Her face was in a glow, and her eyes sparkled with unnatural fire.

‘Do you know what this means ?—do you know what you have done ?’

‘No, dear mother.’

‘Read it, then, and see : you little knew, nor I, that it would lead to this. Oh, my son, Delaunay—my own, my only one !’

And the pent-up agony let loose by the utterance of his name, gushed forth in a torrent of tears ; which, terrible as they were to see, gave such evident relief to her overcharged heart and brain, her daughter blessed their flow. She durst not attempt to soothe or to caress ; but she watched till the paroxysm was past, unable till then even to fix her attention on the letter that was to explain its cause.

The letter itself was not long. It was from Lord Delaunay, written in evident haste ; explaining first, in a few words, that he had arranged the business in which his mother took so much interest, according to her wishes, having but one wish in such matters, to please her in everything. Then he went on to tell her, what his sister’s eyes could hardly believe they read aright—when she found Randolph accused of wronging his trust, of stealing her young affections, of obtaining such an influence over her as nothing but the vigilance of one true and faithful friend could have counteracted—accused, further, of still cherishing those ambitious views of which he had proved himself so unworthy—of making strenuous, though artfully-concealed efforts to at once regain his hold upon herself, and establish a footing in the family—holding out to her, as a lure, the offer of his assistance in her restoration. All this, stated in the plain, terse language of firm conviction, that left no room for comment or reply, and given as a reason for what had happened—and for what might happen yet.

‘You may suppose,’ the letter went on, ‘I did not enter into particulars with the gentleman ; I quietly gave him to understand I knew his antecedents, and expected he would take a plain hint to desist from any further intercourse with any member of my family. He resented this ; and, in short, we parted on terms that can, I should imagine, lead but to one result. At least, he is at liberty to bring on that result as soon as he pleases. I have done my duty, and am prepared to take the consequences. Could I but have your blessing, I should be happier, but I rely on your approval of my conduct, as being what you would expect from my father’s son. If anything unfortunate should occur, my friend Mr. Hope has charge

of my papers, and will tell you everything. I do not myself anticipate evil; I am cooler in danger than out of it; and if things do come to extremities, shall probably feel much less disturbed than I do now in naming it to you. One thing more; it lies heavy at my heart, and may be my last request. Try and see poor Adelaide; I fear I have been a careless, negligent brother to her, and that thought weighs me down; see her, and hear what she has to say—and for my sake——’

With that unfinished prayer the letter broke off—unsigned, undated, it had evidently been left, from some interruption, and sent—who could tell why?

Lady Adelaide durst not grapple with that question; the horror she had seen in her mother’s face was now struggling in her own, as she looked up from that appalling blank page with eyes that seemed stiffening as they dilated, and white lips that could not articulate a word. But by this time Lady Delaunay had partially recovered herself, and her mind was regaining its firmness. ‘We must not allow ourselves to dwell on the worst,’ she said; ‘infinite mercy, in which is all my trust, may have averted the visitation, and kept him from the peril and the sin. A few hours must end our suspense, and we must school our hearts to bear——’ She clasped her hands upon her brow for a moment, and then the rush of bitter thoughts could be suppressed no more.

‘What have I ever done to you, Adelaide, that I never gained your confidence, was never trusted with the secrets of your heart? I trusted *you*—I never forced confessions, or exacted an account of all you did and felt, because I relied on your openness and truth;—what was it that perverted your once frank nature, and made you a coward and a dissimulator before you were a woman? Do you know what you have done *now*?—do you realize the result of concealing from me *then* your position with Mr. Randolph, and the circumstances of your separation? Yes, you may well tremble, and blush; I know you little thought it would come to this; but there never yet was a secret deceit that did not bring its punishment in time. Oh, learn by this to be true, before it is too late! I knew nothing of this man’s character but what was in his favour; his whole bearing and conversation increased my good opinion; I even allowed him a freedom of speech that I should indeed have resented, had I known it was all part of a train of manoeuvres, in which I was made the tool of his private designs—I would fain hope, not of *yours*. It was at my request, to relieve me of responsibility, he went after your brother; I remember now that Charlotte seemed uneasy about it—why did she not speak out, if she knew? Was it that she was pledged to silence, or is *she* too leagued with you all, to deceive and betray me, and break my heart?



No, Adelaide, do not cover your face—let me read it; hide not its shame; for in that shame which speaks of repentance I can alone hope to find strength to pardon you, if indeed you have helped to bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave!

‘Mother—mother! have mercy! I can bear no more. It is not as you suppose; I am not what you think, nor Mr. Randolph either. In his behalf, at least, I *must* speak—I *must* be heard. By all that is sacred, you wrong him—Delaunay wrongs him; in everything I ever knew or heard of him, he acted as a man of honour, and does so still. Who has poisoned my brother’s mind I cannot tell, I dare not even guess: I only know he is innocent, and so am I! My early fault of reserve towards you is indeed heavily punished; but spare me these cruel words till you know all! There is much that you ought to know—that you should have known before, if I could but have told it to you, and which would have prevented *this*—that I dare not think of, and can never face and live! Oh, mother,’ she continued, as her strength failing her at last, she sank on the ground by her chair, and looked despairingly up in her face, ‘is it a sin to wish that Heavenly mercy would accept *my* life—useless and unloved as I am—instead of one of those perilled so awfully in my name, and whose blood will be laid on *me*?’

The hollow tone of agony in which this was said brought her mother’s arm round her; and she felt herself drawn gently nearer, till her head rested on the Countess’s knee.

‘There is but one thing that can support us now,’ she said, solemnly. ‘Let us pray.’

Then in her feeble, broken accents, which gained steadiness as she went on, she slowly repeated those two collects from the Litany, in which one implores assistance for the prayers made in troubles and adversities, from the merciful Father who despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful: and the other beseeches Him mercifully to look on His children’s infirmities, and for the glory of His name to turn from them all those evils that they have most righteously deserved.

Never were those time-honoured words fraught with deeper meaning, or uttered with more intensity of desire; and an answer seemed given even as they rose, in the comparative calm that stole over their troubled spirits. With all Adelaide’s weariness and grief, there was a sense of protection and comfort in resting as she did her head against her mother, with her mother’s hand held fast in hers, so unutterably precious, and so unexpectedly vouchsafed, that even then she blessed God for His mercy, and felt she could trust Him for more. Neither of them would have believed, had it been told them, how soon they would both have found strength to take

the more hopeful view of what they dreaded. After a silence that neither seemed willing to break, Lady Delaunay spoke again.

‘As it is impossible to say how suddenly we may be called upon to act, Adelaide, whatever you feel I ought to know, I am ready to hear. Tell me, if you can, everything. Half information is in such cases worse than none.’

And Adelaide did tell her everything that she could, intending, at first, to confine herself to what was necessary for the justification of Maurice Randolph; but drawn on by her mother’s questions, and her own craving for the relief of confession, to subjects on which she had not thought to speak; very trying, sometimes humiliating, but less so at that moment and in that attitude than in any other. All she had a right to tell, she told—much more than she meant, or was aware of telling, or than Lady Delaunay had expected; and little did she imagine what an additional weight of anguish she was laying on her attentive and patient listener.

It is often remarked that troubles never come alone; but not as often, that from the fact of their coming together, each individual sorrow is the less keenly felt. Perhaps nothing could so have distracted Lady Delaunay’s thoughts from the shock of her son’s letter, as the discovery that she had been mistaken in her niece. Not that she knew all, or half—or that she was disposed to condemn her unheard, in what she did know—but the discrepancies between her statements and those to which she now listened, given with all the simple earnestness of truth—without an attempt to palliate her own faults or lay them on others, but merely to relate facts as they occurred—were glaring enough to startle a much less observant judge. Again and again she questioned Adelaide, sometimes wringing answers that she would fain have withheld—in half expectation that some contradiction might appear; but the more circumstantial became her narrative, the more palpable its truth; and a sickness of heart, such as only those can know who have trusted and been deceived, crept over Lady Delaunay, that sensibly influenced her manner before she was aware. The barrier of proud reserve between herself and her daughter, which had first given way as fellowship in suffering drew them together, yielded more and more, as the feeling grew stronger that *this* might soon be all that was left her in the world. Her severity of purpose seemed for the time forgotten; she permitted her attendance through the evening (which their friends prudently left uninterrupted) without any of her former freezing politeness; and melancholy as was the conversation, it was at least unembittered by the words and looks that had been a harder trial than grief. Adelaide felt the change acutely: her resolution had been knit up to endure harshness with submission, but the strangeness of the milder mood unstrung her

nerves; and when, as she paused to recover from the agitation of painful reminiscences, she felt her mother's hand stroking her hair, and remembered how long and wearily she had pined for that touch in vain, a gush of irrepressible bitterness burst from her unawares.

'Oh, why, why, since you forbade me to write to you, would you never, in all those years, send me one answer to all my messages, all my entreaties, but for one word? Why would you not see me when I came back from India, and only wanted to know your wishes, that I might fulfil them? Why would you never believe I was sincere in my longing for reconciliation and forgiveness? If I could but have written, as I yearned to do, but would not disobey your commands, you could not have thought me hardened so long; not even from my last letter, written in the excitement of momentary passion, and regretted directly afterwards, and ever since—the rather, that I could not believe you meant the message you sent. Oh, my mother:' she continued, pressing her hand in both hers, 'tell me you regretted it—tell me you did not intend to insult him and me by lowering him in my eyes—that you did not mean to mock me with the semblance of kindness, while you were wounding my feelings, and cutting me to the heart—tell me but this, and I will thank and bless you for removing one of my bitterest sorrows—that of having, by my wilfulness and disobedience, warped your noble nature to commit a wrong!'

Lady Delaunay's face darkened, though there was more sorrow in it than anger.

'Child, child, how little you have ever understood your own happiness! I would gladly, if I could, forget that period—forget how my last effort to save you from what I foresaw was treated as an insulting interference. Why do you remind me of it now? Is it to show me that, after all, you are in one respect less changed than I had begun to hope? Perhaps you do wisely; I have unintentionally wounded you once, and I might do it again.'

'Oh, do not say so!'

'Is it not the fact, then, that even now you have not told me all?'

The painful recollection of what had that day occurred, checked the eager reply Lady Adelaide was just going to make. Her eyes drooped beneath her mother's penetrating look, and the consciousness that she was showing embarrassment made her falter, as if with guilt.

'All that relates only to myself—all I am at liberty to tell—but where others are concerned——'

'Yes, Adelaide, I quite understand. I ask no more. When it is too late, you will see your mistake, and think differently of my motives. I do not wish to discuss the point; I have not strength for it now. Do not, however, misunderstand me,' she added, after a pause, seeing the distress Adelaide could not conceal, 'it is not

that I doubt your truth in what you *have* told me. I rely on that unhesitatingly; but there is some mystery at the bottom of the whole proceeding which I cannot now solve; all is dark around me and within me. We are all blind, and He leads us on, how and whither, we know not—sometimes, not till the very end of our course—but He knows, and His light is ready, to shine in His own good time. Well for those who can meet that light, and are permitted to repair their errors before it be too late. Yes,’ she repeated, mournfully, ‘it is very dark about me now, and I am weary, weary!—but I must not sink, for my work is not yet done. If I only knew——Adelaide! what was that?’

It was only Penelope knocking at the door, and blandly inquiring after the Countess’s health; so blandly, indeed, that it struck them both there was something else underneath. Each saw the same impression reflected in the face of the other. ‘Go, Adelaide,’ said Lady Delaunay, trembling; ‘see what it is, and bring me word—directly!’

Lady Adelaide moved to the door, almost by instinct, for she felt too dizzy to see it. Penelope retreated into the passage, beckoning her to follow; Emma was there, and by her side stood a tall, grey-haired clergyman, with a frank, energetic countenance, which did not seem quite that of a stranger—though where and when she had seen it, she could not recall. One glance at their faces confirmed her vague suspicion, but terror deprived her of voice or motion, and she could only clasp her hands in mute entreaty. The new comer stepped instantly forwards, with a manner full of earnest and respectful kindness. ‘I must not expect Lady Adelaide Lyndon to remember me, though I cannot be mistaken in her. Forgive this intrusion, but I am come down express, fearing Lady Delaunay might see the paper and be startled—before——’

‘Come back, Adelaide!’ called the voice within.

Adelaide gasped for breath, and looked piteously at Mr. Powys, whose eyes glistened compassionately, though he hesitated what to do. But the Countess had heard his voice, and her own sounded strangely calm as she again called to her daughter.

‘Bring him in, Adelaide, directly!’

The command could not be disobeyed, and as her eyes fell on Adelaide’s pallid features, and then on those of her companion, flushed with eagerness and haste, a faint colour tinted her cheeks—the glow of steadfast resolution, that was almost heroic.

‘I know why he has come; I know he would not let any one break it to me but himself. Come to me, my daughter, and we will hear our sentence together. Give me your hand: now, help me to say and feel, however dreadful the blow—not our will, but *His* be done!’

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Man the life-boat !—*Russell.*

IN an upper room of a half-finished hotel, in a small half-finished French watering-place, sat, one stormy evening, whose winds and breakers were but in too exact harmony with his own tempest-tossed spirit, a sad and solitary man: so sad, that nothing but solitude was endurable. The pride of manliness could never have borne that any eye should witness the anguish that brought the big drops to his brow, as he stooped over the table before him, and buried his head in his hands, revolving the many bitter thoughts that crowded through his brain, and endeavouring to face the future that glared upon him through the gloom of the present. Never did a stern and resentful aspect veil a deeper sense of wretchedness, than did that of Maurice Randolph when he left Lord Delaunay's presence, bearing on his broad front the stigma of a deliberate insult; a stain cast upon his honour—his word rejected—his appeal disregarded—his friendship flung back as a worthless mockery. Pride had supported him while under the eyes of men, but proved a miserable comforter when alone. What could pride do for him now, but goad him with the maddening thought, that for insult and wrong like this there was but one expiation? What could it do for him when the next, no less maddening, rose to overwhelm his spirit, that such an expiation, let it end as it might, must shut him out from that one struggling hope, shining still afar like the light on the distant harbour, through the darkness and the spray. Once lift his hand against her brother, and what would ever unlock to its touch that coveted treasure-house—the heart of Adelaide Lyndon?

And if he sat down quietly under the scorn and the obloquy—an alternative that no man could face without a sense of despair—what would she think of him? How could he hold up his head in the world—he, who had gone through it so proudly, in the conscious freedom of strength and self-reliance—how could he allow his honour to be held cheap, and his offered hand a degradation, and not feel that he was unworthy to be called a man? Sorrow met him either way; and the struggle between the two had been wringing his heart till it was nearly exhausted in the strife; and the only relief he could find was in pouring it forth in a long letter to his friend the Rector of Cannymoor: such a letter as a man will write *once*, it may be, in his life—when every barrier is broken down by the tide of grief, and all his strength is such conscious

weakness, that the cry for human help and sympathy will make itself heard, even where it is known to be in vain. As he wrote, his bitterness took a softer tone ; when he named Lady Adelaide, it was with a yearning and passionate tenderness, which he had never expressed yet to any living being : and then, as if he could not restrain himself, he gave vent to all his self-reproach for his long misconception of her character—the revenge he had cherished and followed, first in the shape of unjust severity, then in the more subtle form of benefits—all merged since in that longing to serve and befriend her, which had driven him from her presence, and bound him to this enterprise ; luring him on with the flattering hope, that for good service done, she might be induced to pardon—and then to hear him !

‘ Even as I name her,’ he went on, ‘ her image rises before me—that sad, suffering, beautiful face, as I saw it last, when her noble nature could bear no more the torture laid upon it—those dark eyes full of tears—tears that I helped to make her shed—haunt me like a remorse. Oh, that my blood—so I might but offer it guiltlessly—could buy her back that lightness of heart that she had when I knew her first ! But what is the use of my writing like this ? Dear friend, true friend, truth-teller and truth-lover, to you I may confess, without fear or shame, what I feel now to have been my error all along. I must needs do more than others—I must needs be first everywhere. What I fancied to be generosity or charity, or manly resentment, or returning good for evil ; or last,—and this the most specious of all—what was to enable me to deserve a prize of unutterable value ; the zeal, the skill, the persuasive power that were to work such wonders—fool that I was !—all were but so many forms of pride and self-sufficiency, in which I thought myself above my fellow-men. And now I feel how helpless I am ; the voice of God within me warns me to forbear—the voices of men without goad me to go on. Whichever way I choose, I am humbled in the dust ; in the one case by the scorn of others—in the other by my own.

‘ It is such a relief to tell you this, I cannot refrain. Your kind heart will suffer in reading what *I* dare not read ; if I paused to do so, I should not send it. When you have read, pray for me ; long before you receive it my fate will be decided, and whatever it may be, nothing but death will make me cease to love and revere you. Should anything happen to me, do me one service ; tell Lady Adelaide that from my soul I entreat her pardon for all my unintentional wrong ; and that till this moment I never knew how deeply, dearly, devotedly I loved her.’

He could go no further. As he truly said, he durst not pause to read what he had written. He pressed his lips on Adelaide’s

name, sealed the letter in haste, and sent it down to be posted. And it was after this that he sat, as we have described him—listening to the wild roar of the waves, and brooding over what had happened, and must happen next.

‘Oh that there were but some way pointed out to me by which I might escape—some fiery path of peril or of hardship that might save my honour and my conscience, even at the cost of my life! Is there sin in such a prayer in such an extremity as mine?’

There was a step in the passage, a hand on the key, and the next moment a youth, in the undress of a French subaltern, entered with the freedom of acknowledged intimacy, and laid his hand affectionately on his shoulder.

‘Maurice, my friend, what is it?’

Randolph looked up with a start, somewhat impatiently; but Jules Armand was privileged, for he was the son of an old friend, and Maurice had just been serving him; his delay in Paris, in fact, had been caused by his exertions to get him out of the hands of some British sharpers. So he turned the question abruptly, by asking what he had been doing with himself ever since the *table d’hôte*.

‘I have been improving my intellectual faculties, Maurice.’

‘Not before they wanted it, I can answer for that.’

‘Then you ought to encourage a beginner, instead of growling under your moustache like the surly British lion that you are. See, I have been studying the principles of navigation over that marvellous new invention, the life-boat, which those two military *compatriotes* of yours have been good enough to bring over here, as a model for our Government. *Merci!* Are they modest, these English? No offence to you, Maurice, who are a cosmopolite—fellow-countryman of all the globe; but I enrage to see those two warriors, not content with the whole of their precious island to exhibit the wonders of their inventive genius, coming here to teach *us* how to win the government prize! It is a little too strong, for example!’

‘What is she like?’ asked Randolph, indifferently.

‘Like? It is the drollest affair—red as the coats of your heroes at Burgos, *mon cher*, and as to the philosophical principle, it is to save lives *par raison demonstrative*; no more possible to sink than an empty bottle. They undertake to carry a man, besides the crew, for every foot of length, and offer a reward to any one clever enough to swamp them; in short, to hear those gentlemen talk, it is a boat *comme il y’en a point*; and I have five bets against anything ever being saved by it better than a ship’s monkey!’

‘Five bets! you incorrigible good-for-nothing! Whom have you been betting with, and what business had you to bet at all?’

‘*Allors!* was I to hear all those valiant islanders—for there are

a dozen of them here, come over from Hâvre on purpose—challenging each other, and everybody else, and stand by dumb, as if France had never seen a boat before, or could not build fifty better than that boiled lobster? Eh, Maurice? I have not broken my word to you; I was not gambling; it was only a little sport à l'Anglaise. They were all doing it; every man had a fault to find, and yet was ready to fight anybody who presumed to criticize the national invention. Your people are like that, always. That blond milord you called upon, was looking on with his friend, the handsome captain, the one laying down maxims of profound philosophy, and the other yawning; how he does yawn, that hero! It is infectious to look at him. Possibly the maritime experience of milord might be oppressive; *moi qui vous parle*, I have yawned myself, when M. le Colonel, who served under le Duc de Dalmatie, in Spain, grew too eloquent about the Pyrenees, and the great victory at Toulouse. Maurice, you look melancholy; what can I do for you?’

‘Nothing, but be quiet, and let me alone.’

‘*Peste!* that is amiable, it must be confessed. I tell you everything, even to my worst follies, and you call me all the names a Mentor is privileged to use for the improvement of his pupil; and if I am in a scrape, help me out. You are vexed with something in your turn, and tell me nothing; so even if you have, by good luck, been a little foolish too, I have not the satisfaction of either serving or tormenting you.’

‘There, there, my dear boy, you know how to do one, if not the other. It is not worth while to annoy one’s friends every time one is out of humour. Talk of something else, if you must talk.’

‘Of course we must talk—I should think so! But if you have *les vapeurs*, Maurice, I think there will be a little drollery going on to-morrow, which ought to interest you, as he is of your *connaissance*; only you English do take everything so phlegmatically——.’

‘It is well we can, when we have to deal with such remorseless chatterers as you are. What is it to me whether people amuse themselves, or whether they let it alone?’

‘True; you only stand on your eyrie, and look down with eagle glance on our vanities, and when the rascality of the lower earth grows too strong for your luckless friends, swoop down to avenge and deliver. That is your way of taking pleasure, Maurice. And perhaps milord has told you all, and it is a secret of honour. In that case I have heard nothing, and know nothing.’

‘What are you talking about? Anything you have been allowed to hear can be no secret, I will answer for it.’

‘Well, then, I heard him tell his yawning friend—who actually



shut his mouth unexpectedly with surprise—that if some one unnamed resented his language, he knew his duty; he believed him to be a man of courage and good family, and therefore he had made up his mind to the consequences. And his friend said very coolly in reply, that it was well he did, for those sort of fellows were always dead shots. *Hein*, Maurice? There can be but one meaning to that? I know enough of your beautiful language to be quite sure of the fact; and enough of the human physiognomy to be sure now you knew something of this before.’

‘I knew he had insulted one man,’ said Randolph coldly, ‘that was all.’

‘Well, and if he is a man of courage, what can he do but fight him? I do not know what you think in England of such things—they say you are grown scrupulous of late years; but if it was the dearest friend I had in the world, I would rather fight him myself than that he should be slow in such a matter.’

‘You would, Jules, would you?’

‘Yes, that I would. Do you think I would call a man my friend who could not guard his own honour? Eh, Maurice? What is the matter now?’

‘I am stifled in this room. I must have air. I shall go out.’

‘At your service; a lovely evening for a romantic ramble. I hope you have no loose teeth in your head, for the wind will send them all down your throat.’

‘Hark! what was that? Did you hear anything?’

‘Only the rattling of all the windows in the hotel. What was it?’

‘Hush! put out the candles—will you?’

Jules obeyed, and Randolph flung open the window to listen.

‘I am sure of it—there again! signals of distress. Come and try if your young ears can tell in what direction.’

‘My young eyes can, at any rate. Do you see yonder—that light? It grows redder—stronger—look! Is it a ship on fire, no doubt of it.’

Randolph looked steadily, and then closed the window.

‘Jules, how often have you been at sea?’ he asked, while collecting the papers that had been blown about the table.

‘Never but once—bah!’

His face as he relighted the candle just extinguished, told volumes of what that ‘once’ had been.’

‘How often have you handled an oar?’

‘Never.’

‘So I supposed; then there is not much for you to do in active service just yet, but you can help me notwithstanding. Ask no questions, but attend to what I say. If anything should happen to me, there is the address of the friend in London, to whom you are

to send, that is all. Now come along after this wonderful life-boat. We will help her win the prize, let your national vanity kick against it as much as you will.'

'Thou art a brave fellow, Maurice—but—*ah ça !* my bets ! my bets ! Thou wilt ruin me !'

The news of a ship in distress had already spread through the place, and residents and visitors, gentlemen and fishermen, were collecting round the English model—the only life-boat to be had. The owners, a Mr. Shirley and his son, both old acquaintances of Captain Chester's, were already hard at work, preparing for the expedition, and selecting a crew (their own best hands being absent holiday-making) from the volunteers that offered themselves. A dozen voices were in eager discussion when Randolph and Jules came up ; the French boatmen were unanimous that no boat could escape being swamped in such a wind and sea, and as to that British invention, they didn't believe in it a bit. They knew the coast, and they knew the weather, and it would be just throwing lives away. The Shirleys, father and son, exulting in the perfections of their beloved model, small as she was compared with what they meant to build another year on the same principle, were in the highest spirits and confidence ; rules that held good with other boats, were not applicable to the *Defiance* ; if she were only sufficiently manned, they would undertake to fetch every soul on board ; she could not be overset, and she could not be sunk ; if the water got in one way, it got out as fast another ; and such a wind, and such an opportunity, were all they had asked of destiny. Who would join them ? Several pressed forwards, and Mr. Shirley's quick eye was prompt in its selection, without reference to anything but serviceable qualities.

'Eight oars—Edgar, one—Ben Staines, two—Abrahams, three—what, Jacques Potel, with the red nightcap, you ready to risk your life in the new invention after all ? Well done, *mon brave* ; you shall be the fourth. Chester, come—I have seen you pull ; this is just the fun for you—it will be a charity to give you something to keep you awake.'

'My dear Shirley, you are a very pleasant, agreeable, witty fellow, and I admire your jokes amazingly, but even a joke may go too far ; and you don't pretend that you are really carrying yours out to the extent of putting us innocent creatures into this thing, do you ? We shall all be pickled what's-his-name in five minutes—we shall, upon my honour. Oh no, I have no objection. I would as soon be pickled as not ; it is all the same. You don't happen to have such a thing as an oilskin cap, do you ? for the salt water is no joke when it gets into your hair, I can tell you that.'

Mr. Shirley had not waited for the end of this speech ; he was engaging another hand, and had filled all vacancies but two ; one of these was now claimed by Lord Delaunay, who had, as usual, arrived after every one else.

‘You need not look as if you doubted my strength,’ he said, seeing a demur arise ; ‘for I tell you honestly, go I will. I hold my life as cheaply as any of you.’

‘So do I!’ shouted Jules Armand, pressing forwards ; ‘a brave man can always die.’

‘But he cannot always row,’ said a voice, and Randolph’s inexorable arm pulled him back. ‘This is no work for lads like you. Be quiet, Jules, or I shall knock you down. There, God bless you ! there may be plenty for you to do yet if you have patience ; but this place belongs to me.’

A glance at the powerful frame and determined face made the master only too glad to admit such a hand. Lord Delaunay, who had turned at the sound of his voice, gave him one keen, impressive look, and a grave salute passed on either side, but not a word. It was no time for talking ; each man knew there was serious work before him, and the winds and waves soon let no voices be heard but their own.

Manfully they pulled through the seething breakers, and gallantly the little *Defiance* responded to the boasting of her master, as sea after sea broke over her, and yet she neither filled nor over-balanced. Even in the tumult and exertion, Mr. Shirley could not resist pointing this out to his crew, whose behaviour, indeed, was quite worthy of their craft. The resolution of the amateurs made them equal to the old hands in energy ; Randolph’s iron muscles, and the skill, which in Lord Delaunay’s case, supplied the place of strength, were valuable assistants to their progress ; and the sight of the burning vessel, as they advanced, stung them to fresh efforts, lest, after all, they should come too late.

It was a large transport steamer, with troops on board—some of them with their wives and children ; and their shouts and cries, as the boat drew near, were fearful. The dense struggling mass, clustered at the side, showed what a rush there would be the moment there was a chance. There seemed to be no one in command—all was confusion and riot.

‘Our pickling becomes a pleasing certainty,’ said Captain Chester, to his next neighbour ; ‘they will most surely swamp us in a moment.’

‘The *Defiance* cannot be swamped,’ was the cool reply of Edgar Shirley ; ‘but they may drown themselves, if not us. Here, Potel,’ he said in French ; ‘hail the steamer, and tell them if they will not be orderly and patient, we will not come within their reach.’

The boatman put his brown hands to his mouth, and delivered a volley of pungent remonstrance, which was received with yells of rage. Some grew so excited they jumped overboard, and the panic and fury seemed to be increasing so fearfully, Mr. Shirley resolved to risk it, and the *Defiance* dashed alongside; the next moment there came a rush, and a dozen men leaped into her, making her rock and reel again, but without destroying her equilibrium. Several others missed their spring, and fell headlong into the waves; these were rescued with difficulty, and the life-boat having as many as she could hold, prepared to pull off again. At this sight, the despair on board the steamer became terrific; for the terror lest the fire should gain ground before the ark of safety could return, was more than their excited brains could contemplate. What fearful catastrophe might have occurred, it were hard to tell; but Lord Delaunay suddenly springing from his seat, caught a rope that hung over the vessel's side, and climbing up with yachtsman-like agility, stood in the midst of the crowd. His friends below saw him vehemently gesticulating, arguing, menacing from man to man in fluent, energetic French; he appealed to the soldiers, to show themselves worthy of their name, of their nation, of their glory, of the memory of the great Napoleon; and not by these unmanly, unsoldierly terrors, throw away at once their chance of life, and the honour that only made life valuable. He, an Englishman, had come on board to share their fate, whatever it might be, and would not leave the vessel while a man remained in it; and he was sure such brave men would do their utmost to help him keep order, and save the weakest first.

In the noise and confusion, much that he said was lost; but the slight form and fair face, with the commanding gestures, and glittering eyes, in which the spirit of his mother was beaming forth, struck them with respect and admiration. Ashamed of their disorder, they fell back, and after a little while, were ready to obey every injunction given them. The commanding officer of the detachment, with the captain of the steamer, and several seamen, had been washed overboard and drowned in a vain attempt to lower a boat; they had lost one of their paddles, and all attempts to check the progress of the fire proving futile, it is no wonder they had begun to despair. Now that hope had revived, all were glad to obey orders; and such means as could be resorted to were adopted at once, so as to give them every chance. Lord Delaunay singled out a little drummer, whom he had observed maintaining his coolness through all the tumult, and placing him by his side, said, 'I know *you* will do your duty. Keep by me, and beat your drum as I bid you.'

The brave little fellow promised he would, and kept his word.

It was a tremendous night, and a tremendous struggle. Pull as the rowers might, and did, every man knew that in the state the steamer was in, there was no saying whether those left behind might not perish before they could return. There was one in the *Defiance* to whom this gave a strength that seemed superhuman. One signal had he exchanged with the gallant form, conspicuous in the red fire-light, as it stood cheering the sinking hearts around by sheer coolness and self-possession; and that signal Lord Delaunay had read as if it had been written, 'If I live, I will come back.'

And they did come back—again, and yet again—and as the drummer beat at the Englishman's order, the soldiers put the women and children on board first, and then stepped in themselves, quietly and almost in silence. 'The peril increased every moment; the life-boat was crowded as much as even her wonderful buoyancy could bear, and still there were three looking over the side, with the flames gaining on them fast—an old seaman, the gallant little drummer, and Lord Delaunay.

'Can you take one more—only one?'

'Yes, my lord,' returned a voice, and in a few moments Randolph had made his way up to the deck. 'There is room for one, Lord Delaunay.' The Earl shook his head. 'But not for me. Come, *mon camarade*, descend, quick—and take the boy with you—there must be room for his small body.' The sailor hesitated. Lord Delaunay stamped imperatively. 'You dare to disobey? Descend!'

The next moment he and Randolph were standing alone. The little drummer, as he looked back, burst out crying. 'How long can you hold out?' shouted Mr. Shirley.

'While life lasts. Pull off, pull off,' said the Earl, waving his hand, 'and God bless you all—you will do your best to save us; I know that.'

There were those afterwards, in describing the scene of that night, who said that it was terrible to see the excitement of the English when they had left those two in that peril. Wearied as they were, almost to exhaustion, with the efforts they had already made, their strokes came feebler and slower, but not a man dreamed of giving in, or resigning his post to another. Without a word being exchanged, it was a fixed resolve in every heart to save them if it was in human power; and as soon as the last man from the steamer was landed, they pulled off again.

Alas! before they had gone far, a wilder and fiercer blaze of light announced the destruction of the vessel: no one could stand in her now, and live.

Pull lustily now, gallant oarsmen, and warily withal, or never more will you or England see those two brave men again! Up with the lantern—ready with the rope—shout, with what little

breath and lungs you have left, to keep up the courage of the swimmers, if yet they exist to see or hear! Yes—in that red glare that shot up so opportunely, was seen a dark object struggling—it is one of them, clinging to a spar—thank God! Steadily old Shirley steers towards the spot: Captain Chester, his nonchalance by this time thoroughly soaked out of him, stands erect, and poises the rope ready to cast. ‘Hold on! hold on there! Now one stroke forward!’ And well it is flung, and tightly it is grasped with the strength of despair; and the light of the lantern flashes on the face of Maurice Randolph, supporting himself and the insensible form of Lord Delaunay, by the help of the floating spar.

It was no easy task in that raging sea to lift in the Earl, but Randolph held him up with indomitable resolution, and after two or three ineffectual attempts, he was grasped by sturdy hands and hauled in. ‘So far, so good—now for the other!’

Where was he?

Gone. In that moment, as his hold of his charge relaxed, he lost rope, spar, and consciousness, and disappeared.

‘Men!’ shouted the master, ‘if we lose this gallant fellow, I break up the *Defiance* the moment we land. Back oars! he is gone under her. Abrahams, take the helm. Give me the rope!’

He was just preparing for a plunge: his son stopped him in time. ‘Hold hard, hold hard, sir! he is up again! there! one pull, and I’ll have him yet!’

The thick dark hair was just within reach: the young Englishman darted half over the side, and clutched it tightly, happier than if it had been a Koh-i-noor: several eager hands were helping in a moment, and among them they laid him, half dead, by the side of the partially recovered Earl.

The cheers and shouts of welcome that greeted their landing were not to be forgotten by those who heard. The *Defiance* had saved her timbers—or rather, her tubes—and won her prize into the bargain.

As may be supposed, the neighbourhood rang with this exploit; and there was no small amount of hustling undergone at the hands of officials by those who ought to have done it themselves, and not have left the work of deliverance to the chance heroism of visitors. With all that, however, we have little to do. On the second morning after it happened, several people were collected on the quay at Havre, waiting to go on board the little steamer bound for Trouville—now become an object of curiosity, as the scene of this much-talked-of adventure. Among them was an English traveller, carpet bag in hand, whose quiet, keen face, as he stood hemmed in by his eager neighbours, betrayed evident symptoms of the interest he took in the conversation, that could not but fall on his ears, whether he would or not.

‘When I tell you,’ vociferated one voice in particular, to a dissident companion, ‘that I saw Jules myself, not an hour ago, and he told me all! Ask him a little; he was there; he knows the whole history; he *raffoles* of one of those Englishmen, a heart of gold, a second “Sir Edward Klerbbs,” such as Méry drew; a man to found a town in the centre of an Indian jungle *à lui seul*. He has his reasons, this good Jules; if he has been playing Lorédan, he has found his profit in it, you will see.’

‘But what had Jules to do in that *galère*? I thought he was on duty at Paris.’

‘I asked him that, but he would not stop to tell. His whole soul was full of *ce cher Maurice*, who seems likely to leave his heroic relics for the Naiads of Trouville to weep over, in return for his devotion.’

There was a laugh, and a sudden movement in the crowd, caused by the signal to go on board. The English traveller going with the stream, found himself on the deck between the two companions, who were still discussing the same subject.

‘It is droll how these English precipitate themselves into adventure. It makes a distraction from their constitutional *ennui*, no doubt. But some of these are badly hurt, and as our science is not good enough for Britannic bruises, Jules says they want a surgeon over from London. He was here in hopes of meeting with one.’

‘With all my heart. For the rest, an Englishman more or less in the world, the loss is not considerable. Here comes Jules.’

As the words were uttered, young Armand came racing down the quay, and bounded on board, just as the rope was cast off. He was assailed unsparingly with questions, more or less ironical, which he took with good-humour at first, but presently waxed irate.

‘Gentlemen, I have but one word to say on this matter. He of whom you speak is my friend. I owe him more than my life, and I love him better.’ And with that he turned briskly, and walked to the other side of the boat, where the quiet English stranger presently joined him.

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ said the latter, politely, ‘but I am anxious to know if your friend whom you speak of as Maurice, can be the same as mine. Is his name Randolph?’

‘*Vraiment oui*; and yours, sir?’

‘Lyndon.’ The youth caught him by both hands, and shook him warmly. ‘The friend I have been writing to for him! Oh, you are indeed welcome, sir! A friend of Maurice must be mine too. When did you arrive?’

‘Last night, or rather this morning, after the most frightful passage I ever had in my life. We were nearly lost ourselves in that gale, but I little imagined what was going on here.’

‘Who could? What a night it was! I shall never forget it—never!’ And out he poured the tale of the wreck as far as he knew it—and his fears of what might be the result.

‘I was left on the shore; I could not row, but I suffered more deaths than they braved. When the last cargo arrived, without Maurice, and it was all they could do to bring what they had, and I heard that he had given up his place to another, and gone to share the fate of his countryman on board, I could have wept tears of blood. I envied those men who rushed panting back to save him. I was up to the waist in water to help them when they returned; and when I saw him, I thought he was dead. Many of us thought so; and when we carried him and the Comte into the hotel, there was not one who would not have given the world to see them recover. The Comte came to his senses first; he had been stunned, it seems, by the fall of a spar, and Maurice must have jumped overboard with him, and swam, holding on to the spar till they were picked up. He was grieved to the heart, *ce brave petit milord*, and we could not get him to bed till he knew Maurice was alive. And when we were rubbing and warming him, poor fellow! we found he had a chain of hair round his neck with a little old watch hid in his bosom; and the Comte looked very hard at it, but he was so ill himself directly after, he had to be carried off to bed. Maurice has not yet spoken. I should not have left him, except to find a better surgeon than we can get near at hand. Ah, sir, as his friend, I may tell you freely, I shall never have such another as he has been to me!’

Then, in the warmth of his demonstrative nature, he told how Maurice saved him from worse than death—from dishonour.

‘Yes, sir, I, an officer of France, to whom honour is more than life, blush not to confess to you that I owe it to him, my friend. He had known my father some years ago, and I met him accidentally in Paris, and he found out that a scheme was laid by some *scélérats*, English and French, all equally bad, to plunder me at play, and make me lose, not only all I had of my own, but a sum intrusted to me for the pay of my men. I who speak to you, who shudder when I speak, I was on the brink of that gulf—I was mad, blind, deaf to all but the horror of ruin and hope of retrieving my loss; and he came like an angel of deliverance to my side—saved me, ransomed me, and carried me off by force. I have promised him never to play again, and I never will. I do not say I never bet, for I lost my last napoleon yesterday.’

The passage was tolerably rough, and for some time conversation became a matter of difficulty; nor was Henry Lyndon at all sorry when the steamer arrived at her destination. As he stepped on



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There was a laugh, and a sudden movement in the crowd, caused by the signal to go on board. The English traveller going with the stream, found himself on the deck between the two companions, who were still discussing the same subject.

‘It is droll how these English precipitate themselves into adventure. It makes a distraction from their constitutional *ennui*, no doubt. But some of these are badly hurt, and as our science is not good enough for Britannic bruises, Jules says they want a surgeon over from London. He was here in hopes of meeting with one.’

‘With all my heart. For the rest, an Englishman more or less in the world, the loss is not considerable. Here comes Jules.’

As the words were uttered, young Armand came racing down the quay, and bounded on board, just as the rope was cast off. He was assailed unsparingly with questions, more or less ironical, which he took with good-humour at first, but presently waxed irate.

‘Gentlemen, I have but one word to say on this matter. He of whom you speak is my friend. I owe him more than my life, and I love him better.’ And with that he turned briskly, and walked to the other side of the boat, where the quiet English stranger presently joined him.

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ said the latter, politely, ‘but I am anxious to know if your friend whom you speak of as Maurice, can be the same as mine. Is his name Randolph?’

‘*Vraiment oui*; and yours, sir?’

‘Lyndon.’ The youth caught him by both hands, and shook him warmly. ‘The friend I have been writing to for him! Oh, you are indeed welcome, sir! A friend of Maurice must be mine too. When did you arrive?’

‘Last night, or rather this morning, after the most frightful passage I ever had in my life. We were nearly lost ourselves in that gale, but I little imagined what was going on here.’

‘Who could ? What a night it was ! I shall never forget it—never !’ And out he poured the tale of the wreck as far as he knew it—and his fears of what might be the result.

‘I was left on the shore ; I could not row, but I suffered more deaths than they braved. When the last cargo arrived, without Maurice, and it was all they could do to bring what they had, and I heard that he had given up his place to another, and gone to share the fate of his countryman on board, I could have wept tears of blood. I envied those men who rushed panting back to save him. I was up to the waist in water to help them when they returned ; and when I saw him, I thought he was dead. Many of us thought so ; and when we carried him and the Comte into the hotel, there was not one who would not have given the world to see them recover. The Comte came to his senses first ; he had been stunned, it seems, by the fall of a spar, and Maurice must have jumped overboard with him, and swam, holding on to the spar till they were picked up. He was grieved to the heart, *ce brave petit milord*, and we could not get him to bed till he knew Maurice was alive. And when we were rubbing and warming him, poor fellow ! we found he had a chain of hair round his neck with a little old watch hid in his bosom ; and the Comte looked very hard at it, but he was so ill himself directly after, he had to be carried off to bed. Maurice has not yet spoken. I should not have left him, except to find a better surgeon than we can get near at hand. Ah, sir, as his friend, I may tell you freely, I shall never have such another as he has been to me !’

Then, in the warmth of his demonstrative nature, he told how Maurice saved him from worse than death—from dishonour.

‘Yes, sir, I, an officer of France, to whom honour is more than life, blush not to confess to you that I owe it to him, my friend. He had known my father some years ago, and I met him accidentally in Paris, and he found out that a scheme was laid by some *scélérats*, English and French, all equally bad, to plunder me at play, and make me lose, not only all I had of my own, but a sum intrusted to me for the pay of my men. I who speak to you, who shudder when I speak, I was on the brink of that gulf—I was mad, blind, deaf to all but the horror of ruin and hope of retrieving my loss ; and he came like an angel of deliverance to my side—saved me, ransomed me, and carried me off by force. I have promised him never to play again, and I never will. I do not say I never bet, for I lost my last napoleon yesterday.’

The passage was tolerably rough, and for some time conversation became a matter of difficulty ; nor was Henry Lyndon at all sorry when the steamer arrived at her destination. As he stepped on

shore, a face he remembered well, being much too handsome to be forgotten, appeared on the look-out, as it seemed, for Jules.

‘Oh, there you are! I hope you had a pleasant trip. Charming amusement this weather. Have you succeeded?—No?—My dear Lyndon, how d’ye do? By what marvellous concatenation of circumstances have you turned up here? Upon my life, I never was better pleased to see any one than I am to see you. Physic makes herself scarce, and Divinity is not forthcoming, so it is a real comfort to have one black Grace, at any rate. How clever of you to guess we might want our affairs put in order! I have just been telling Delaunay, that, as I was ‘silly enough to lose my chance of the House of Lords, I consider myself good for a cool thousand, for my attentions—I do, upon my honour.’

‘But from what I hear, Captain Chester, I cannot but hope your cousin is likely to keep you out of your legacy for the present, however well deserved.’

‘Yes; I labour under that disadvantage, certainly, and the chances are ten to one against my ever being so near the earldom again. He is sure to marry, out of sheer perverseness: and I am such an unfortunately first-rate nurse, he persists in getting better now; but, as I tell him, nothing is so deceptive as convalescence, and it is his duty to make his dear mind easy about all his pecuniary obligations. Upon my life it’s true, though he doesn’t seem to see it. Good news for you, Armand—your hero is better; but don’t go flourishing off again in a hurry, my dear fellow—for between one and another, and the fidget Delaunay makes about him, I am run off my legs; I am, upon my honour; and if you don’t take care, I shall be gone from your gaze, like a beautiful what’s-his-name. I shall expect a codicil in that quarter, too; so don’t think you will have all the chances, *mon camarade*! There he goes, tearing off as usual. What ill-made men those French officers are! Tailors’ younger sons, mostly, who get their uniforms for nothing. I wish I did, I know.’

With all his affectation of indifference, Captain Chester had in reality been in no small trouble, both for his cousin and Randolph; and with the help of Jules Armand, and Lord Delaunay’s antiquarian travelling companion, Mr. Hope, had divided his attentions between them day and night. As neither of the three had ever nursed anybody before—for it was still in the days of the thirty-nine years’ peace, and the hussar (who was afterwards at Balaklava and Scutari) knew better how to handle a sick horse than a sick man—the *sous-lieutenant* had only a boyish recollection of his mother’s *tisane*—and the antiquary could have given a lecture on the drugs and pharmacy of the old physicians, possibly have compounded the manna of St. Nicholas, if required, but was in a happy

state of ignorance touching the new—it was easy to believe the patients would owe a great deal to nature. Still, it was a comfort to hear they were doing well, and Henry privately resolved to take his own measures with his friend Randolph, if not satisfied with those of other people. They walked on to the hotel, Captain Chester talking all the way.

‘Charming little *bijou* of a place this, is it not? Especially at this time of year, and in this stage of completion. So refreshingly unsophisticated. You ask for a cup of coffee, and they bring you a regular service, and the biggest article is the tea-spoon; and mine hostess holds the leg of mutton in one hand, and slices away with the other. They are building busily here, and in a few years it is to be another Brighton; and, except that there is nothing to see, and nothing to do, and nothing to eat, I cannot conceive a more attractive spot. Nothing would please Delaunay but he must come and drop a tear to William the Conqueror’s glorious memory, in his chateau, and see my friend Shirley’s new life-boat, the precious article that was nearly the death of some of us; and the consequence is, that we are all heroes now, and you can’t conceive a greater nuisance to a shy man like myself. They threaten crowning one with evergreens, like May-day what’s-his-name—and making poems about us! Imagine a nervous gentleman holding her Majesty’s commission, put to such torture! I have had to shake hands with more fat men, and do the civil to more worthy mothers of families in white cotton night-caps, than I ever could have conceived possible; and it is lucky I have Delaunay’s purse to draw upon, for every mother and mother’s son expects a five-franc piece at least. I do not know what Delaunay will say to it, but I know they will not let him off without some piece of attention in the way of a banquet, or a procession, or something, civic or military. I am not sure which would be the greater bore of the two.’

‘You have shown nerve enough in danger,’ said Henry, smiling, ‘to make one hope it may be equal even to the laurel crown.’

‘My dear fellow, if they would only send me a decent hair-dresser to get rid of the vile salt water that my very brains are steeped in, that is all I ask of the national gratitude, and Matilda may twine her wreaths, not for me, but for Maurice Randolph, who has had a touch-and-go escape from the cypress bough. He is quite laid up, poor fellow, and it is uncommonly lucky, for we fully expected we should have to shoot him, that is to say, if he did not shoot *us*.’

‘Indeed?’

‘Yes. Delaunay, it seems, knew more of him than was pleasant, and took care he should know it; and we were expecting him to send a message of some kind, when the freak seized us all to go

frog-fishing in this eccentric way, and now, I suppose, it will be out of the question.'

'I trust so. I hope to convince Lord Delaunay that, instead of knowing too much, he does not know quite enough of my friend Mr. Randolph.'

'Well, if you can, it will put things on velvet, for then he can apologize, and they can shake hands. It is very awkward as it is, for he certainly saved Delaunay's life, and, as I tell my cousin, it is very generous on my part to forgive his officiousness. Here is our hotel; and while you are making your arrangements, I will let him know you are come.'

When Henry Lyndon, after satisfying himself about Randolph's state, was admitted to the Earl's room, he was struck by the feverish eagerness with which he was received. Lord Delaunay was sitting over a little stove, muffled in his cloak, and shivering as if it were winter; but his face was flushed and excited, and he could hardly wait till they were alone before he began. 'You are come to tell me something, Mr. Lyndon—what is it?'

'First, my lord, that I am very glad to see you safe. It was more than I had reason to expect.'

'You know, then, all that has passed? How?'

'I know enough to have made me lay aside every other consideration and follow you, to prevent, as far as a man's power could, your being so fatally misled one step farther.'

'Sit down, sir, I beg, and do not keep me in suspense. Tell me exactly what you mean.'

'You must permit me, then, to ask first, if you did not receive a letter from Miss Conway, accusing Mr. Randolph of mean and unworthy conduct towards your family in general, and your sister in particular? No wonder you look astonished; and when once you have admitted the fact, I am prepared to explain how I know it.'

'I do admit it, and I wait for your explanation; for, I confess, Mr. Lyndon, it seems to me to require a very satisfactory one.'

'Happily, my lord, Miss Conway's own ingenuity has put that in my power.'

He briefly but forcibly detailed the facts, to his auditor's manifest disgust and amazement.

'Mr. Powys being of my opinion, that such a misunderstanding might lead to serious results, I felt it my duty to come off at once, and prevent them, if possible. I *know* the accusation to be untrue; but as your lordship is not bound to take my word against your cousin's, I only demand, in justice to all, that you investigate the matter—that you take Lady Adelaide's testimony, and get at the

*facts*—before you allow yourself to be guided by the bare, unproved assertions of a lady, whom I hesitate not to charge, deliberately, with a design to mislead you altogether.’

‘A very serious charge, Mr. Lyndon.’

‘I feel it to be so, my lord; therefore I make it seriously; for it involves vital interests. Your own happiness—that of your mother—that of your maligned and neglected sister, who has no one to plead for her but myself—all may depend on the decision you make. If it can be proved that, for some purpose of her own, Miss Conway has misrepresented facts in one instance, it may no less be proved in another; and I am prepared to prove it, when called upon.’

Lord Delaunay was silent some time; in considerable agitation.

‘Mr. Lyndon,’ he said, at last, ‘I have the highest opinion of your character, and therefore can own to you that your assertion fills me with dismay. I thought my cousin’s letter bitter and unwomanly, but to doubt its truth it never occurred to me for a moment. I must have time to think, and a little more strength before I act. Be assured I will investigate the matter thoroughly, and see justice done. I felt the other night, so brave a man could never have acted a dishonourable part—his whole conduct belied the possibility. But one thing I must insist upon. That letter was confidential, and intended for my eyes alone. The circumstances that have made you and Mr. Powys acquainted with its purport, give you no right to make use of that knowledge without my consent; and I require of you both that it be held sacred. Promise me this, for yourself and for him.’

‘Of course,’ wrote Henry to the latter, in relating what passed, ‘I had no choice but to comply, and send you the very words of his injunction. I had a long and earnest conversation with him, and he seems deeply grateful for the pains I have taken, and for the comfort of being able to think well of the gallant man to whom he mainly owes his life. I have cleared up several difficulties already, and am as hopeful of the result as I can be with a man of his peculiar disposition. He knew nothing of his mother’s movements till I told him of her being laid up at Cannymoor; and grieved as he is for her accident, it seems a great satisfaction to his mind that she is at last under the same roof with his sister. May the result answer his expectations!’

‘I am sitting by Maurice Randolph’s bed. He is sensible, but in too much pain and fever to converse—no wonder. I fear it is a rheumatic attack, that will keep him a close prisoner for some time. But both are doing well, and their friends will feel their sufferings are more than compensated by the worst peril they have escaped, and the merciful deliverance they have helped to effect.

‘I have just been sent for to Lord Delaunay. He is in great trouble; having discovered accidentally that Captain Chester, misunderstanding a wish he expressed when he was first able to collect his thoughts, sent off an unfinished letter directed to Lady Delaunay, which he had slipped into its envelope when the alarm of the fire was given, intending to complete it afterwards, if at all. This letter must have caused her great alarm and anxiety. I have only a moment to catch this mail, but the Earl entreats you, by all your tried friendship, if possible, to take the news of his safety to her yourself; and tell her from him that he retracts his words, and entreats her pardon for his error. When they meet he will explain all. I shall write to Cannymoor to-morrow.’

This letter reached Mr. Powys simultaneously with the newspaper containing an account of the exploit; and his fear lest his friend should learn the first intelligence through that channel, made him at once accede to the request, and hurry down to Cannymoor. It was a trying and anxious journey, but he felt amply repaid when he found the comfort his arrival gave; and he was easily persuaded, instead of putting up at the village inn, to occupy Mr. Lyndon’s room, in which a bed had been hastily prepared. Lady Delaunay did not ask many questions that night—she was too worn out to do more than comprehend the mercy, and accept it, with a sensation of relief that could only find vent in broken ejaculations of thanksgiving. Nature was exhausted; and her prostration was so great, her daughter watched by her bedside the greater part of the night, in silent thankfulness, as heartfelt as her own—though some of it was given to man.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

And, oh! the home whence thy bright smile hath parted,

Will it not seem as if the sunny day

Turned from its door away?

While through its chambers wandering, weary-hearted,

I languish for thy voice, which past me still

Went like a singing rill!—*Mrs. Hemans.*

THE first beams of the rising sun raised Adelaide Lyndon from the short sleep which watchfulness and anxiety had allowed her. As consciousness and recollection returned, the power of resting fled; and a feverish longing for a breath of morning air made her rise and dress hastily, to seek refreshment in a stroll in the garden. As she passed Mr. Powys’ door, it was ajar, and she heard him, early as it was, in full conclave with Anderson, who was just replying, ‘I have made every inquiry, sir, without success; but I rather think Lady Adelaide could give you some information on the subject.’

What this might mean she did not wait to discover, but hastened out. It was a mild March morning, such as sometimes visits us between the gales, with promises of spring, and hints about primroses and violets, that have a wonderful effect in cheering the spirits. A favourite warm nook, in which the earliest of these sweet messengers were always to be found, rewarded her search ; and as she stooped to gather them, a quick step on the gravel behind her announced the approach of their visitor.

The frank, kindly manner that no one could resist, made Mr. Powys popular, go where he might ; and from the little intercourse between them overnight, she had already begun to look upon him as a friend. With a pleasant remark on her early habits, he gladly accepted her violets, and offering his arm, they walked up and down together, quietly enjoying the freshness of the air and the song of the birds. His anxiety, however, on one subject made him hasten to introduce it. From what Anderson had said, he believed she was aware of the object of Lady Delaunay's journey, and if she could in any way relieve his mind on the score of his imprudent little friend, it would be a great obligation. She was only too glad to be quit of the responsibility, and when he knew what she had done for Lilla Brittan, had the comfort of his hearty approval and thanks.

'When can I see this poor child, do you think, Lady Adelaide ? I should like to ascertain what her state of mind is, before I meet Lady Delaunay again ; for the sooner she knows she is safe the better, though you did quite right to say nothing about it last night. Is the Rectory near at hand ?'

'About ten minutes' walk. We should find them sitting down to breakfast if we went there now. Dr. Home is earlier than we are.'

They set out accordingly. Mr. Powys looked inquisitively about him, asked about their services, and where the new school was to be ; praised the neatness of the churchyard, if he could not the architectural beauty of the church, and was still talking when they entered the rectory gate. Lilla Brittan, just come down to breakfast by a stupendous exertion of virtue, bounded in her chair at the well-known sound, and when they appeared, hid her glowing face between her arms. She need not have been so alarmed ; he was much too sorry for her to say a word of anger, and his first greeting was one of congratulation on finding such good friends. Then he sat down to talk to the rector, and in a few minutes they found they had met before, years ago—knew ever so many mutual acquaintance, and were soon in a full tide of sociable conversation, during which Lilla gradually recovered her spirits and courage. It was not till after the visitors had partaken of the family break-



fast, that Mr. Powys asked her if she would take a turn with him round the garden ; and while he was winning her to a full account and confession of all her adventures and faults, Lady Adelaide found the opportunity she was longing for, of pouring out her full heart to her old friend. She had so much to tell him of yesterday's terror and deliverance, it did not strike her at first how agitated her listener was—nor how tremulous were his low, earnest expressions, of thankfulness even while he heard that Maurice was on a sick-bed. Her own tears fell fast as she named him, and what he had saved her from in saving her brother.

'There is no one but yourself, sir, to whom I can say freely what I feel ; you, who are his friend, as well as mine, will receive from me the gratitude I have no means of expressing to himself. The obligation is overwhelming, and yet I gladly accept its burden, and know it must rest on me for life. If I could only be near him in his sufferings, to watch and wait upon him as a sister, I should count it an honour ; but there is nothing I can do but to bless him, and pray God to bless him—as I did on my knees last night and this morning, and ever shall, while I have voice to utter, or thought to lift in prayer !'

The old rector passed his rough hand several times across his eyes, and tried hard to find his usual steadiness of voice, which the harassing anxiety he had felt had considerably shaken.

'Truly,' he said, at last, with a slow earnestness not very common to him, 'the lad has been saved, though as by fire ; and since he was ready to give you his life, these gentle words do not misbecome your womanly dignity, neither do these tears your kind feelings ; I accept them in his name, for I know he would think himself overpaid.' Then, with a sudden burst of suppressed emotion, that so took him by surprise he had no time to force it back, he caught her by the hands, the tears running down his weather-worn cheeks.

'Do you know *now* what the man is, you told me could never be your friend ? Do you feel *now* that it is no degradation to be served by him ? Can you be grateful without wounding your pride, at last ? I always hoped you would ; and now that you have been so open with me, I will have no secrets with you. I have been wretched enough on your account, and his ; it is time you knew why, and knew him. Read that.'

And Adelaide read, as well as her moistened eyes would allow her, that outpouring of anguish and tenderness that had gushed from Randolph's aching heart on that terrible night, when death, in its worst form, had worn the image of a deliverer ; and the last thought he had expressed, had been of love for her—the love of which she had never heard till this moment.

He had loved her—loved her from the first—unknown to himself so long—unacknowledged by a single word to her—he, whose contempt had thrown a blight on her early promise, whose enmity had steeped these latter days in gall, whose benefits had appeared but a more polished form of humiliation and affront—he, whom she had begun to think of as, at the best, softening towards her with a patronizing pity—had loved her all the while so ardently, so disinterestedly, so tenderly as *this* !

Hers had been no woman's nature to receive unmoved such a revelation ; the quick blushes that gave her cheeks the past bloom of seventeen, dishonoured not the dark dress of her widowhood ; nor were the soft tears of humility and emotion out of place in eyes that had wept so many of desolation and grief. But the vision of the past that rose with them was so blended in its hues, so strange a mixture of pleasure and sorrow, that when she at last found nerve to lift her eyes to the rector's watching face, it was with a look in which the pleasure took the form of a tear, and the sadness of a smile.

'One by one,' she said, 'my heaviest burdens are lightened or rolled away. *This* has removed a very heavy one ; I can now look back with more courage ; I shall in time learn to feel grateful for that regard which now adds to my sense of unworthiness. But *you*, who have such influence over him—my own true friend and his—try and turn his generous heart elsewhere ! Do not let him, loving him as you do, build his happiness any longer on that which can never repay him—never ! The soil is exhausted, the ship is no longer seaworthy, the walls are crumbling, and the hearth-fire gone out ; there will be no harvest for his toil, no haven for his voyage ; no rest, no peace for him to dwell among ! Do you think *I* do not know, better than most, what a lifelong, earnest affection from such a nature would deserve ?—a nature that, even when I shunned and dreaded, I never ceased to honour for what I knew. And would I offer him in return a worn, sick heart, whose utmost ambition now is to finish its work, be reconciled, and at rest ? No—life has better things in store, I hope and trust, for one so generous and brave : and some day he will acknowledge it, and be grateful then, perhaps, to *me*.'

It had been a matter of no small anxiety among the nurses, what the effect of the preceding day would be on Lady Delaunay ; and it was a relief beyond expectation to find, that, in spite of everything, she was as one refreshed in body and spirit. The heroism of her son cheered her like a gift from Heaven ; more than she would have told any living being, or have owned, had she been charged with it. His having suffered in the act, made her pride in him the

greater, and the removal of the dreadful fear under which she had laboured, produced a reaction much healthier in its tone than could have been hoped or expected. After a refreshing sleep, she rose with calmed nerves and renovated strength; ready to look her duties in the face, and as resolute to carry out the plan of conduct she had laid down, as if she had never felt a moment's weakness, mental or physical. As she was bent on coming downstairs, the study was prepared for her reception, that she might not be molested by visitors, or disturbed by Mrs. Lyndon; and as soon as she was installed there, Mr. Powys paid her a visit. He had told Lady Adelaide as they walked home from the Rectory, that he was satisfied Lilla Brittan had had punishment enough, and was only now an object for tenderness and pity; but he had his doubts how the Countess would receive her; she had her own peculiar views on the subject, and no arguments of *his* ever seemed to move her an inch. She might forgive, but she would not forget, or allow other people to do so.

'Can those forget who are forgiven?' said Adelaide, with a deep sigh. 'But I do not think the poor girl has much to fear; and she has promised me to submit, let my mother's decision be what it may.'

'That is her wisest plan, certainly. If there is a woman to whose magnanimity I would entrust despotic power sooner than another, it is Lady Delaunay; but the more helpless and the more passive an offender, the safer she is in her hands. Will you name the subject to her, or shall I?'

'It will be better for the poor girl, sir, if you will undertake it. It can be no secret to you, I know, what my position is: no one can sympathize with such repentance more, or assist it less.'

'I do not agree with you,' said he, with great kindness; 'I think example is the greatest assistance possible; and since you have permitted me to allude to the subject, I may venture to add, that little as there is in my power, what there is, you may command, if you will trust me. Those who love and revere Lady Delaunay most, must be the most deeply interested in seeing her made happy.'

'Ah, sir, if I could only hope in any way to add to her happiness, it would indeed be worth waiting and suffering for. Hitherto, I have only caused her grief.'

'Yes,' said he, 'that may be, for there is no grief like the gnawing of an inflexible resentment; and that has been hers, and with all her virtues has embittered her life. She will never be happy till that is gone, though she may have to learn the great lesson of mercy, as Jonah did, by finding a worm in her favourite gourd. Win her by patience and submission, and you will put a new spirit into her whole existence. And for yourself,' pressing the hand she

held out in grateful silence, 'be of good courage ; for all that friendship can do for you is being, and shall be done.'

Lady Delaunay could, at first, talk only of her son ; and when he had read her again, as much of Henry Lyndon's letter as was not strictly private, and they had fully discussed the subject of the exploit and escape, she naturally began to ask for more explanations than he could give. Forbidden by the Earl to be explicit, he declined having anything to do with it, and referred her to her son, who considered the matter entirely his own. She grew rather impatient at this.

'There seems to be no end to mysteries everywhere ; I hope I shall understand them in time.'

'I hope you will,' said he. 'If I had my own way, you should know everything now ; more than I know myself. I feel sure that whatever mistakes have been made, or acts of injustice done, have all arisen from half information—whether intentionally mutilated or not.'

'You think, then, injustice has been done ? Speak openly.'

'I am afraid so ; severity may be called injustice when pushed too far ; but if you ask for my proofs, I have not many to give. Such as they are, they all tend to show that you have some one in your confidence, who is in the habit of not telling you the exact truth. Must I speak plainer ?'

'No, no !' she said, wildly, covering her eyes with a shudder ; 'my own thought ! and I cannot yet face it—I dare not !'

There was a pause of some minutes ; she seemed strongly agitated.

'No, no !' she again repeated, 'it is impossible ! it must be ! Mistaken in her opinions, erroneous in her judgment, hasty in her conclusions, she may have been : great misunderstandings there certainly *have* been ; all these may be, shall be remedied, when I can unravel them, and decide what is best for all ; but such a horrible thought as that, against one who has eaten my bread, and drunk of my cup, and been to me as a daughter, it were ingratitude for her affection, it were injustice in me to admit. You would say so, if you knew all.'

'Perhaps so,' said he, with an expressive smile. 'I do not know much about it, but I am learning ; and unless I am much deceived, so are you. I will not interfere with your teacher ; you cannot have a better.'

'I need one,' she returned, with mournful humility, but still with the firmness of one whose resolution was taken ; 'my task is very difficult, and my responsibility very heavy, but I must not shrink from either. Where I have bestowed my trust and esteem, I will

not withdraw it without convincing proof; where I have withdrawn it, I will not give it back without probation. On that subject I dare say no more. Now to one that weighs on my heart. You have heard, no doubt, of my failure, and Anderson's, in discovering that poor lost child. Do you think you could spare time to try, till I am a little stronger?

He made one of his emphatic grimaces of shrewd good-nature.

'Not unless I know what I am to do if I find her.'

'Nothing very severe,' said Lady Delaunay, smiling. 'Try and convince her that she had better trust her real friends, even if they check and correct her faults. You can conscientiously do that, I know.'

'Indeed I can; it is a lesson I would gladly instil into wiser minds than poor little Miss Brittan's. And if I succeed, and persuade her to submit to you, and wait your decision, what is to be my reward?'

'The one you will like best; the pleasure of bringing her to me to be forgiven.'

'Then I can tell you it is won already, but not by me. Our Perdita was found yesterday; and there,' pointing to the lawn, where Adelaide and Walter were walking together by Mrs. Lyndon's Bath chair, 'there is the friend who persuaded her to trust in your love, and bear your anger. The recompense ought to be hers.'

A few words sufficed for explanation. Whatever severity Lady Delaunay might profess, she could not conceal her gladness at the news of her *protégée's* safety, relieving her of a vague dread that had oppressed her ever since her flight. He had no difficulty in getting her assent to his suggestion: she wrote on a slip of paper, 'Bring Lilla Brittan to me directly;' and a tap against the window brought Walter in, who was sent to deliver it to his mother. The result was, that in less time than could have been supposed possible, Lady Adelaide, breathless with the good speed she had made, appeared at the door, with the trembling culprit hanging on her arm. Mr. Powys admitted them with a smile of congratulation, and passed out; Lady Delaunay extended her hands, and Lilla, with a great outburst of crying, flung herself into her arms, clung round her neck, kissed her dress, her feet, sobbing all the while, with the vain attempt to utter what she wanted to say about her sorrow and remorse; and the more she sobbed and struggled, the more gently and pityingly did the Countess soothe and caress. The sceptre of mercy was laid on her neck, and there was nothing more to fear but her own unworthiness of such love.

Adelaide watched them in silence; there was no envy in her nature, and she could be glad, and was glad, to see another rescued from her own doom; but her longing for a share of that unre-

strained tenderness, of which a gleam had visited her last night, but seemed lost again to day, made her heart swell grievously, as she stood by unnoticed; and she turned at last to leave them to themselves. Lady Delaunay stopped her.

‘Do not go, Adelaide, without receiving my thanks. You have done me a service I shall never forget.’

She held out her hand; her daughter took it and pressed it to her lips.

‘Ah, madam, if I only knew how to serve and please you, I should have something left to hope.’

‘You think so? Have the kindness to wait a few minutes. Lilla, my dear, I am not going to keep you now, for I am still weak, and have a great deal to do and think of. I shall hope to see Dr. Home soon, and thank him in person; meanwhile you must thank him for me, and as soon as possible I will let you know what I have arranged. Go, and begin a new course from this time.’

Lilla retired, feeling as if she had suddenly broken out of a dreadful dream in a sunny morning; and Adelaide stood waiting her mother’s pleasure.

‘As this child’s rescue,’ said Lady Delaunay, after a short silence, ‘was the object of my journey here, I have nothing now to detain me the moment my strength allows me to travel. The accounts from France will decide my movements—either to go over to Delaunay, or to meet him wherever he lands, whichever he prefers; but in either case, if you have no objection, I should like to take Walter, to spend a few months with me and his uncle, before we settle what school would be most for his advantage.’

‘Walter!’ gasped Adelaide. She was quite unprepared for this.

‘Yes; can you trust him to my care?’

‘You wish to take him with you—*now*? For how long? Months, did you say? No, no, you are not in earnest: it is impossible!’ She seemed robbed of all presence of mind; and gazed upon her mother with a feeling akin to terror: nor did Lady Delaunay’s remark, that of course she had no power to carry out her wish if she objected, in any degree calm her agitation.

‘No power, mother?—you are all-powerful over me, and you know it. You know your will at this moment is law; I have given you up mine—but is this then, indeed, the test I have been longing, yet trembling to hear?—to lose him from my side—to do without the sound of his step, of his laugh, so suddenly—so soon? Oh, how shall I ever bear it?’

‘If you cannot, Adelaide—if you do not think it is for his advantage to see different scenes and people before entering a public school, and to become acquainted with his uncle, and more at home with me—I will say no more about it. I am not such a

tyrant as to take your child from you against your will. It would give me pleasure to have him, if you can feel complete confidence in my care—but not otherwise.'

'Will it indeed give you pleasure?' said Adelaide. She turned to the window, and was silent a few moments, struggling to speak with calmness. 'You took me by surprise,' she continued, presently. 'I had thought—but do not suppose I fear to trust him with you; he will be in better hands than mine; he loves you already, and I know you cannot help loving *him*. It is for his good—yes, I own it—I thought only of myself. You shall have your wish: give me a little time, and I shall feel more grateful; I know it is all meant in kindness.' She came a step nearer, and looked earnestly at her mother. 'Are you satisfied? Will that please you, mother?'

'It ought,' said Lady Delaunay, and she rose from her chair, and kissed her on the cheek and brow.

'As equal salutes equal, I once more salute you. The bravest of your ancestors never fought a harder battle than yours, or struggled more gallantly for victory. Courage, courage still! and though, it may be, through honourable wounds, the conqueror's reward will be won at last!'

'Alas!' thought Adelaide, as she turned silently away, 'may it not be bought too dearly, and given too late?'

It was her last repining thought; all the energy of her nature was now called up to the work before her—that of obeying, not only without resistance, but as if with her own free will. Before facing Walter, she broke the ice by naming the subject to her sisters, and received the first blow in the conflict she was to wage, in their intense astonishment, not at his being invited—that was a matter of exultation—but that *she* was to be left behind. They had been settling between themselves (and it had been no small comfort after their father's horrid letter yesterday, full of nothing but hints that they should all be ruined) that after all this, it stood to reason and common sense, that the Countess would either take Adelaide back to town with her, or arrange when she was to follow: and when once Adelaide was in London and comfortably settled, it would not matter so much if they had to let the Manorhouse for a time, and go there too, to be near her, and Henry and Emma—and how nice that would be! But this was quite a different thing; and but for real pity for the mother's beseeching eyes, which belied the would-be cheerful satisfaction with which she detailed the scheme, Penelope would have given vent to a vast amount of spleen—which, as it was, she reserved for the private benefit of Lucy.

Emma's first impulse was a throb of pity that made her clasp her own little one tight, wondering what she should do if called upon to give her up to anybody. But she persisted in taking the

bright side of the question with Adelaide, so as to make her feel she had done perfectly right in consenting, both on Walter's, account and her own—as it was certainly meant for the boy's advantage, and *must* be intended to pave the way for a complete reconciliation.

‘Depend upon it, she longs to have you both, but thinks that would be going too fast. Only see how much ground you have won, step by step, since she came; and now you will have a representative whose face will plead for you better than any words! Oh, I was sure all would come right in the end; and it will. Only go on being patient—how you have done it all this time astonishes *me*—I am afraid my temper would have given way a dozen times already, and if such a proposal had been made to me—Oh, promise me one thing—that if she keeps him too long, and you feel at all anxious, or that you really do want to be in town within his reach, you will just do as Henry said, and come to us.’

It was rather like teaching rebellion, and Adelaide durst not indulge the idea, but it comforted her, nevertheless.

The next step was to tell Walter. He was quite taken by surprise. Go with his grandmamma? He should like nothing in the whole world so much—it would be the jolliest fun possible, if mamma went too. Ah, but that was not to be; he was growing a great boy now, and it was time he learned to do without her for a little while, and to take care of himself, before he went to school. He could not have her *there*, and it would help her to feel happier about him afterwards, if he had a little experience first. She wanted to see if he could keep up the habits she had tried to instil, when she was not at hand to remind him of his duty. His grandmamma would be very kind and good to him, and he must obey and please her in everything, as he had obeyed and pleased herself.

‘I trust you, Walter, to make her happy in having you with her. Will you promise me to try?’

Oh dear, yes; he could see no difficulty in that. He could read to her, or she could read to *him*, which was much pleasanter; and he could push her Bath chair, as he did poor Granny's at home, or give her his arm when she walked. And she could take him to see all the great London sights, the big electrifying machine she had talked about, and the dissolving views, and all the lions and tigers, and to hear Professor Faraday's lectures. How jolly it would be!

It looked rather as if Lady Delaunay's happiness was to consist in amusing *him*, but his mother was too relieved by his good spirits to throw any damp on his sanguine expectations. If a momentary pang shot through her heart to think how easily he seemed to take the idea of leaving her, it was quelled by another of self-reproach,



as she saw that in the delighted bewilderment of his new prospects, he by no means realized what the separation would be. She was spared the pain of overcoming reluctance, and for that, at least, she ought to feel thankful—and tried hard.

When Mr. Powys heard the new arrangement, he made one of his ambiguous gestures, half smile, half wrath ; put on his hat, and walked five times round the garden, before he offered any comment at all. After cooling down his feelings by this slight exercise, he came back, looking more amiable, to challenge Walter to a game ; and from that moment they were inseparable. His previous positive assertion that he must return to town directly, was found to admit of a little modifying ; as they were all so good as to press him, he should wait to escort Lady Delaunay ; an arrangement which gave satisfaction to everybody—to Walter in particular—and above all, to his mother. Lady Adelaide might and did regret and apologize, when she saw their dignified clerical visitor disentangling and remodelling a hopeless kite-tail that had baffled even her maternal patience ; cutting up his own particular *Guardian* to supply deficiencies, and finally, when it was fairly in flying order, racing with it all over the grounds, with Walter at his heels ;—she might look distressed, when that young gentleman lay in wait on the sideboard to jump on his back, and then made him carry him to the very top of the house to see his ‘skeletons’—unhappy, woe-begone remnants of soaked plants, in every stage of decomposition, on which Walter discoursed the meeting at length, with more or less accuracy,—until the subject of skeletons being started, *apropos* of ghost-stories—he was next discovered sitting on his new friend’s knee, with staring eyes, and hair on end, hugging him round the neck, partly with terror, partly with delight—beseeching him, whenever he attempted to stop, to go on, only five minutes longer—just this once ! But notwithstanding all her distress, and all her polite attempts to rescue the too good-natured guest, she felt, every hour of his stay—as he meant she should—that her boy had found another friend.

And then came all the minor cares and perplexities of a mother with a scanty purse, who has to send off a boy on short notice, and knows that his equipment is not all she wishes it to be. His shirts were just finished, that was a comfort ; and everything he had was as tidy as ladylike abhorrence of disorder could keep it under the circumstances ; but who that ever had to do with boys, knows not how far their skill in destruction will shoot beyond the industry and watchfulness of their guardians ? It was just the close of winter, too, and his change of suit had been waiting for sundry excellent reasons ; and turn his wardrobe over as she might, she could not make it present such an aspect as her motherly pride

wished it to do before his strange relations. There was plenty of work for her fingers, however, as it was, the time being very limited; and Emma, finding out what she was doing, came and brought a nimble pair of hands, well trained to the business by active brothers; and cheered her as much by her sympathy in the cause, and anxiety that he should do them all credit, as by her actual help.

In answer to his mother's letter, offering to come to him wherever he pleased, Lord Delaunay wrote to request she would be at Dover by a day that he named, so that he might find her there on his arrival. He was nearly well enough to leave Trouville, but intended to make a circuit, and return to England by Calais, as he had promised to meet the Shirleys there, and see another trial of the life-boat. He was particularly anxious to see his mother, so hoped she would not object to meeting him. Mr. Randolph was better, but would not be equal to an interview, he feared, before he left. So much of the letter Lady Delaunay made public, and it decided her movements, as far as she was personally concerned; but she was in strong doubt about Lilla Brittan. To take her back to Bryanstone Square, and leave her with Mrs. Marsden and Miss Conway, even for the short time she expected to be away, did not appear advisable, though she hardly liked to own it to herself. Lilla's own manner, when it was hinted at, showed her that; and Mr. Powys unhesitatingly pronounced it to be out of the question. But a suggestion he had been revolving ever since he saw her, appeared to offer so many advantages, it was finally agreed upon. This was, that Dr. Home, whom he had sounded on the subject, should receive her temporarily as a boarder, and allow her and Sophy to carry on their education together. He came to see Lady Delaunay, and talk it over, frankly owning his inability to give his grand-daughter the advantages he could wish; and which a small addition to his income would enable him to do. As far as he could, he had hitherto been her sole instructor, and his young guest should share his personal tuition, as well as that of the teachers he should procure from Lilford. What Lady Delaunay heard and saw of him, made her gladly assent to the plan, and the main point once decided, minor particulars were easily arranged; the Countess's ideas were rather more liberal than the rector would permit, and Lilla was rather alarmed at first, on hearing that Sophy learned Italian, and Latin, and Euclid—but on the whole all seemed to promise well.

It had been Dr. Home's fixed determination, before he saw Lady Delaunay, that nothing should prevent his making such an assault on her conscience and feelings, as must immediately result in a complete reconciliation with her daughter; but he changed his

mind after the first interview; and owed to Mr. Powys, he was quite ashamed, at his age, to find how easily he could be silenced by a woman.

‘I shook her once, though,’ said he, ‘when I told her how that poor thing’s mother came at last to pardon and receive her, and was only in time to see her die. I saw her proud lip tremble *then*, at any rate. Well, I will do my best to keep up her daughter’s courage. When people do wrong, they must bear the punishment; and, as you say, interference may do harm instead of good. Only, if a spirit like hers is once broken, it will be past human skill to restore, or to replace. Ay, but it is sad work, I can tell you that, to see a young heart grow old before its time.’

During the brief remainder of her stay, Lady Delaunay seemed now to have but one object—that of making herself agreeable to her hospitable entertainers; and as might be supposed, when an honoured guest takes pains to show respect and attention, succeeded marvellously; learning a great deal more of their characters, and getting a clearer insight into their domestic interior, than anybody was at all aware. Miss Lyndon, it is true, confided to Adelaide in a moment of candour, that she never talked to her mother, without feeling unusually sensible—she might say, clever—at the time, and an overwhelming conviction of silliness afterwards. Adelaide herself once happened to come in unexpectedly, just when Lucy was in the midst of a long, confused history of her unfortunate popularity, and Walter’s snow-balling, in which she was floundering in great terror beneath Lady Delaunay’s gravely attentive eye; but she retreated precipitately without being observed, and how the story ended she never knew. It was evident, at any rate, that the Countess wished to leave a favourable impression behind her; for she made a point, as Miss Lyndon triumphantly observed, of sitting in the drawing-room two whole afternoons, on purpose to be introduced to their visitors; and visitors in plenty they had, for all other objects of curiosity appeared utterly insignificant in comparison. Everybody was charmed with the manner in which she took it for granted they were her daughter’s friends, and accordingly entitled to her grateful regard; nor was there one among them who would not have been ready to declare they had always cherished Lady Adelaide as a sister—and really to believe it at the time. As for Miss Lyndon, she was in glory; nothing, as her guest had expected, could have been devised to give more complete satisfaction, than her allowing herself to be seen and talked to. It quite made up for Walter’s departure, which was announced to all comers as an amicable family arrangement, acceded to as a personal gratification for his dear grandmamma. One ill-advised individual being unlucky enough

to ask how it was Lady Adelaide was not going too, received a volley of shot and shell in reply.

‘Very much obliged to you, but we could not give up both at once; Lady Delaunay is too considerate for that, in the state of my father and mother’s health; and Adelaide would not leave home just now on any account. We could not refuse to spare Walter, as it was made such a point of; but we cannot lose my dear sister at present—thank you all the same for being good enough to mention it!’

Her sister was too busy to be present at these receptions, beyond showing herself for a few minutes. Walter’s preparations fully took up her time. He had been at first rather disappointed to hear the glories of London were to be deferred; but this soon changed into eager anticipation of showing off how well he could swim, and how much he knew about zoophytes, shells, and seaweeds. If mamma were but going! She would scramble about with him anywhere, he knew, and carry every horrible thing he picked up, without a murmur; but he had his doubts about grand-mamma, and questioned her going up Dover Cliff with him to see him act *Mad Tom* at the top, like the picture in Dr. Home’s old Shakespeare. His heart began to misgive him sorely, when he saw all his things packing up, and that as his mother stooped over his box, to contrive, against all known laws of possibilities, to put in some pet articles he had brought, when every corner was filled up already—the tears dropped in with them, leaving a most unmistakeable mark on his prize copy of *Philosophy in Sport*. He put his arms round her neck as she knelt—an attitude in which he had her at a disadvantage, and could hold her as long as he liked—and then and there began to rebel. Why was he to be taken away from her when it made her sorry? He should tell grand-mamma, once for all, that she must have both or none; and if she didn’t like it, she might let it alone.

She suffered him to give vent for a little while, partly because, if she attempted to interrupt him, he stopped her mouth with a kiss, and her respiration with a hug—and partly, because it was a sorrowful pleasure to hear him regret they must separate: but when he would listen, she drew him down by her side on the floor, and in her turn, got her arms round *him*.

‘Do you remember one unhappy evening, not very long ago, Walter—when I made you my confidential friend, and told you what my greatest sorrow was?’

‘Horrid day! Yes, I *hate* to remember it.’

‘Do you remember how you said, some day, perhaps, you should meet her, and tell her all my unhappiness, and win her back to love me?’

‘Yes, I do;’ and he began to nestle very close.

‘Then will you now prevent my obeying her when she has expressed a wish, meant in real kindness to *you*; or will you go with her cheerfully and lovingly, and by your love and by your conduct, win her to think lovingly of *me*?’

His eyes brightened as he looked up into hers.

‘I’ll do *that*, mamma; see if I don’t! But, I say, I wish I had not let Mr. Randolph have my chain: he can’t care for your hair as I do. If I see him, shall I make him change?’

‘Why, no, my boy; as you made the exchange, I think you must abide by it. So now we will finish your box.’

The last evening had come, and the whole party were assembled in the drawing-room, expecting Dr. Home and his two young ladies, to take leave of Lady Delaunay and Walter. Mr. Powys was playing at spellicans with the latter, persisting, in spite of all remonstrance, in overcoming impossibilities by the simple process of digging his elbow into the middle of them. Lucy was making tea, and Penelope enjoying the Countess’s conversation and anecdotes, which she did with peculiar zest, laying up a store of materials that made her popular for a long time to come. Adelaide, for the last three-quarters of an hour, had been sitting by Mrs. Lyndon, putting her knitting to rights, which during her recent secession, had gone from bad to worse, till Walter’s kite tail was a joke to it. As she patiently unravelled rows, and took up stitches, and counted and re-counted, and for the hundredth time, taught, and explained, and assisted—a sense of loneliness and desertion, that had been gradually creeping over her, as the necessity for action ceased, threw a tenderness in her manner towards this worn and feeble remnant of what she had left to cling to, that at last stirred the poor old lady’s dormant feelings. She stroked her hand several times, and patted her cheek. ‘I don’t think I have seen you all day, have I, my love? You are not going to leave me, are you?’

‘No, dear.’

‘I thought somebody said something—and I saw a trunk in the passage, and you have been so busy. Is he come?’

‘Hush, dear, and take care, or that stitch will drop again. There, I will take it up before it goes further.’

‘But some one is going away, I know; why won’t you tell me?’

‘Do not you remember that Walter is going, and that he will bring you some scarlet wool from London, to knit him a comforter?’

‘Ah, but young men—young men—they never think. It is so long now since we heard and I never knew if that coat fitted

properly, though he promised——’ Her eyes were wandering uneasily about the room, as they always did when her brain was at all excited; but she kept caressing the hand that Lady Adelaide had laid on hers.

‘You won’t go, will you, my love? I can’t do without you; and you must rest, and take care of yourself; I dare say your own dear friends will spare you; it is so good of you to stay with a stupid old thing like me; you won’t be in a hurry to go, will you?’

Lady Adelaide’s smile, as she assured her she was going to remain, calmed her for the moment; and she sat, as she did sometimes, placidly looking at her, as if the contemplation of her beauty gave her pleasure. Lady Delaunay’s flow of anecdote suddenly ceased; her eyes were irresistibly drawn in the same direction.

‘It is nothing,’ observed Penelope, thinking she looked uneasy; ‘only a little excitement; Adelaide knows how to soothe her. I am afraid she has heard and noticed more than we thought she did.’

‘How long has she been like this?’ asked Lady Delaunay, kindly.

‘She has been gradually getting worse ever since my poor brother Walter went to India.’

Adelaide looked round for a moment with a quick warning gesture, but it was too late. The poor old lady’s lips and hands and eyes were already at work, and she began in an emphatic, deliberate tone: ‘I am sure he had every excuse—every excuse. I always said so. He couldn’t help it, could he? Young people will be young, and they can’t care for us as we care for them; and it was very natural he should like such a sweet face better than his poor silly old mother’s. But oh dear me!’—and with a heavy sigh like a tired-out child, she laid her head on her daughter-in-law’s shoulder—‘I wish—I wish—I wish—that he would come—or that he had never, never gone!’

Lady Adelaide folded her arms round her, and caressed her as if she had been Walter. Penelope had risen, but held back to wait the result. Lucy began to apologize to Lady Delaunay; poor dear mamma was not often like this; she hoped the Countess would make kind allowances, but she could see——

‘I see, indeed,’ said Lady Delaunay, gently, ‘that Mrs. Lyndon has the inestimable comfort of tender and considerate daughters.’

Lady Adelaide bent her head lower over her charge; she could not meet any other eye that moment. Something was said about trying what a little music would do, but she did not look up or pay much attention, till roused by a sweet solemn strain, such as had

never issued from the Manorhouse piano since it had borne the name of one; the touch so delicate and so firm, the pathos so irresistible. How long it was since she had recognized that sound—how eloquent now appeared its voice! She raised her eyes, and saw her mother watching her as she played. One long, earnest look passed between them, and then Lady Delaunay, without turning her head, gradually suffered the harmony that seemed to flow spontaneously from her fingers, to pass into the well-known and beautiful anthem, '*O rest in the Lord—wait patiently for Him—and he shall give thee thy heart's desire.*'

Whoever it was meant to soothe, in one respect it succeeded.

The softness, the touching expression of the music, seemed to have a powerful influence over poor Mrs. Lyndon. Her feeble moaning ceased, the fretful restlessness passed away, and her daughter-in-law was able to lay her back on her cushions, where she subsided, according to her usual habit, into a state of placid torpor, from which she was only roused when it was time to retire. As soon as she saw her tranquil, Lady Delaunay returned to her seat; observing with a smile, as they expressed their admiration and thanks, that she had not done such a thing for months, and it might be months before she did it again. There was no one at home who cared for an old woman's performances.

Adelaide, who had moved nearer, involuntarily stopped when she heard the last words, and leaning over Emma's chair, who was nearest, began to make some remark upon her work. Emma pressed her hand in answer; she could not have said in words how she felt for her at that moment; but even while she did so, she saw her start, and her colour rise, and following her eyes, perceived that a visitor had just been admitted, whom no one expected to see—Mr. Abel Spindler.

He was dressed more carefully than usual, and came in with an elaborate display of sociable friendliness, as if conscious of deserving and claiming a welcome.

'Ladies, your most obedient; I could not leave Cannymoor without paying my respects, and carrying the last news to my good friend Mr. Lyndon, who seems to be detained in London longer than he expected. Mrs. Henry, I hope you have good accounts of your excellent husband; he is very good to spare you to us, I am sure. My Lady Adelaide, I trust I see you well, though I need not ask. May I solicit the honour of being presented to the Countess Delaunay?'

Lady Adelaide had drawn up her tall figure to its full height, and her whole bearing wore more of its old haughtiness than Emma had yet seen. She could not refuse the requested office, but her flashing eye and opening nostril betrayed how she resented

its being forced upon her ; and the coldness with which it was performed was too marked to be unnoticed. Miss Lyndon did not look much better pleased than her sister at the intrusion, after all that had passed, and plainly intimated they had not expected the pleasure of seeing him while her father was away ; at which he only laughed, and looked round, rubbing his hands, as at a capital neighbourly joke. Could he have forgiven himself if he had so failed in what was due to Lady Adelaide, as to go away without an inquiry in person ? If he had, he knew she would not have forgiven *him*.

There was not much forgiveness, certainly in her face, as she watched him going from one to the other, beneath her mother's calmly observant eye, with all the familiarity of a cherished and welcome family friend ; and in his assumed air of easy cheerfulness looking, she thought, more insufferably vulgar than he had ever looked before. But she felt that to check him would only make matters worse ; and for Mr. Lyndon's sake, from whom she daily received long, vehement letters, plainly indicating the excited and harassed state of his mind, entreating her to keep everything secret, and be on civil terms with the enemy—for his sake, to whom she owed so much, she must bear this crowning mortification as best as she could. It was hard work ; for Mr. Spindler knew it as well as she did, and took good care she should be aware of the fact.

‘A dish of tea, Miss Lucy, from your hands will indeed be a treat, and a bit of your inimitable cake—thank ye, Mrs. Henry, I wish you a better office. It is a long time since I had this honour, and as it is, I can't stay long ; you must excuse my running away early, for I leave Cannymoor to-morrow, and only wished to see you all, and take Mr. Lyndon the last bulletin of Lady Delaunay. And that reminds me, my Lady Adelaide, I have one little word to say to you—if you will allow me.’

He had taken up his cup of tea and a liberal portion of hot cake as he spoke, and made a step towards her ; then he halted, with a slight smile on his lips, waiting for her to come to him. To the surprise of Lady Delaunay, though her colour came and went, and her lip trembled with anger and pride, she yielded as if to a spell she had no power to resist ; and for a few minutes they stood together, he talking in a low voice, very eagerly and fast, and she slightly bending her head in reluctant attention, but answering only as it seemed, in monosyllables, or now and then by a silent gesture. As soon as she was released, she turned away, and retreated as far as she could ; and he immediately crossed over, and sat down by the side of Lady Delaunay.

It had not taken her long to ascertain, that however homely or old-fashioned some of the good people might be to whom she had been already introduced, they were models of good society com-



pared with this new acquaintance; nor could she help noticing that he was regarded, even by her own high-spirited daughter, with as much dread as dislike. It may therefore be imagined how agreeable she found his conversation. He began by complimenting her on the exploit of her son, giving her to understand that Mr. Randolph was one of his most intimate friends. Then in a more confidential key, he went on to praise Cannymoor, and the houses, and the neighbourhood, and the value of the property, and in five minutes had let her into the secret that *he* was proprietor of nearly all the family estate—in fact, as he jocosely expressed, was the better Lyndon of the two, in all but name. Then he touched on Walter's departure, congratulated him on his good fortune—only hoped they were not going to lose Lady Adelaide too—that would leave them in darkness indeed. What a pity her ladyship was going so soon! Positively, *must* she go to-morrow? He would have had such pleasure in showing her over the whole property, which, of course, must be an interesting object to her; and in explaining his plans for the improvement of the whole neighbourhood, which, as Lady Delaunay was known everywhere as the first lady philanthropist of the day, must give her satisfaction. For his part, he thought there was no duty so incumbent on every man as that of making every sixpence go as far as possible—much truer charity than flinging it away because you were asked; the foundation of all true happiness, all real peace and order, was, to his thinking, the *pocket*; and he slapped his own with an emphatic gesture that was too familiar to Lady Adelaide not to catch her ear and eye. She glanced at her mother, and saw by her erect attitude as she sat playing with her hand-screen, that it was only her courtesy prevented her showing how much she was disgusted and offended. Her heart died within her; what could she do? It was plainly intended, she thought, to show her his power of tormenting, and her position made her more helpless than ever against assaults of this kind. She had just resolved, in desperation, to try if some diversion could not be made, when she caught Mr. Powys' eye, making her a sign, which she obeyed at once, by gliding to his side.

'Excuse me,' he whispered, as she sat down, 'but why do you let such a person as that vex and tire your mother?'

'I cannot help it,' she said, in a low tone of utter dejection. 'I am so situated, that though it is done on purpose to annoy me, I am quite powerless to hinder or resent it.'

'I am sure I know his face; was he not in the house of Ousel and Merriman some years ago, when a young man?'

'Yes; that gentleman whom you heard playing the organ yesterday, is grandson to the then head of the firm; Mr. Spindler often boasts he began there on next to nothing.'

'That would be no disgrace, if his character rose with his success. I thought it was the same man. But, my dear Lady Adelaide, I can only say, without wishing to be uncharitable, or presuming, he is not a fit person for you to associate with.'

'I have found that out already,' she said, with a faint smile.

'Can I help you? He does not seem to have recognized me yet, but I could make him look exceedingly foolish if I chose. He may forget, but others have sharper memories.'

'No, pray, I entreat you, dear sir,—leave him alone. If he began any coarse violence when she is by, I should sink with shame. It is only for one evening more. Oh, here comes the rector at last! I am so glad.'

As she expected, the entrance of these fresh visitors caused a change in the posture of affairs, and Mr. Spindler had no excuse not to move from Lady Delaunay's side. While he was considering what to do next, he found Mr. Powys looking keenly at him, and for the first time recognized his features, unpleasantly connected with bygones he was disposed to let alone. He turned white, red, and yellow in rapid succession, and seemed to shrink into half his former size. Mr. Powys said nothing, but made a slight sign with his finger to the door. The hint was taken, and when Lady Adelaide, who had gone forward to greet the new comer, looked round again, her enemy had vanished.

With a heart relieved, but still full of misgivings, she watched for an opportunity, when, leaning on the back of her mother's chair, she could at least look the apology she might not utter aloud. It was understood and accepted; for there was a smile on Lady Delaunay's lips as she whispered, 'Was that a specimen of your intimate society?'

'No, mother,' returned Adelaide, in the same guarded tone, but very earnest, 'only a specimen of trouble which we have to bear.'

'I feared as much; it is worse than I anticipated. Adelaide,' she continued, under cover of a vehement, somewhat uproarious discussion, that had sprung up between Walter and the two young ladies, about what he meant to do when he was away—'Adelaide, I fear, too, that you are suffering me to depart in ignorance of much that I ought to know. My information of your being in difficulties was not so incorrect as I at first supposed.'

'I am in difficulties,' said Adelaide, quietly.

'Of what kind? Tell me in a word.'

'Ah, dear mother, they would be none if I could tell them to you.'

'You will wish you had, Adelaide, when it is too late. You can have nothing in common with a man of that stamp, in which a mother's advice, at least, would not be your safest.'

‘A mother’s?—yes; but I have been so long without that resource, I have been forced to learn to dispense with it. Our paths have gone so widely apart, that in most of my troubles—and this is one—I cannot hope for your sympathy; and where there is no sympathy, there could be no help, were I even at liberty to ask it.’

‘I am rebuked,’ said Lady Delaunay, mildly: ‘but remember—confidence begets confidence.’

‘Yes, mother, I know it does; and I have shown you mine to the uttermost. I have given you the most sacred pledge that was yours to ask, or mine to yield. That you have been made the witness, and partly a sharer, of some of our domestic vexations, is something for you to pardon, that I feel painfully. But if it ever returns to your remembrance, when your displeasure at the unintentional affront is passed, let it occur to you as a motive for indulgence, that I have to bear them still, without my one earthly comforter.’

Lady Delaunay’s eyes, do what she might, swam in bright drops of emotion. She laid her hand on her daughter’s, and looked up into her pale, resigned face, with genuine pity and admiration that she attempted not to disguise.

‘My daughter, you have given him up at my desire, to show me your submission to my will. I have accepted this as obedience; what will you do for me now out of love?’

The sudden gleam on Adelaide’s countenance was as if a sunbeam had broken through a cloud. She followed her mother’s expressive glance to where Lilla was now sitting by Mr. Powys, smiling and flushed, but rather shy and downcast, as if receiving a little good-natured advice, that was more wholesome than flattering or palatable.

‘That young thing is a charge left on my hands, which I fear I have failed in keeping aright. A younger, more attractive friend, whom she would love, as girls do, with all her heart—silly as it may be in its effusions—might set her in the way of improvement, and help her to become what she was designed to be. Such a friend and guardian let her find in you—for my sake.’

There was a soft pressure laid upon her shoulders; the nearest approach to an embrace that Adelaide had yet dared to offer.

‘Now, my dearest mother, I at last believe that you will one day forgive me.’

And in that hope, and with that last touch of gentleness, she went through the parting of the next day; talked cheerfully to Walter to the last minute, and seemed to forget herself and her feelings entirely, that nothing might agitate her mother, or cause her a painful thought. She refrained from word or look that might seem an appeal to her sensibility; only when the moment came for Lady Delaunay to enter the carriage, silently offered her,

with an eloquent glance, a bunch of violets, fresh plucked and full of fragrance; and as she accepted them, bent down, and kissed her hand. The hand was the next moment laid upon her head, and then she was drawn for one moment close—very close, and Lady Delaunay's lips were on her brow, and her voice whispered, 'Rest in the Lord—*He* shall give thee thy heart's desire!'

It was their last adieu; a kind pressure of Mr. Powys' strong hand—a wild clasp of Walter's arms, that would have ended in a roar, if she had not by a tremendous effort hurried him away—a confusion of voices, of sounds, of feelings unutterably sweet and bitter, so blended she could not tell them apart—and they were gone. And what happened immediately afterwards, she never knew, for the world seemed to pass away from her with them.

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### CHAPTER XXX.

My boy, my Arthur, my fair son!  
 My life, my joy, my food, my all the world!  
 My widow-comfort, and my sorrow's cure!—*Shakespeare.*

MISS CONWAY had a relation on her mother's side—a widow lady with a small fortune and large family, who came regularly to town for the best part of the season, as a duty to society for which no subsequent sacrifice could be too great. She was always looked upon as an excellent manager of her income, and of her daughters' interests; and had certainly succeeded in marrying two of the latter, and making the former do a great deal more service than many three times as large. She never hesitated to give it as her firm conviction that money was the first object in life; she had no objection to others differing from her in opinion; they might be right, and she might be wrong, but that, she confessed, was the result of her long experience. As Lady Delaunay had rather a different estimate of life and its duties, there had always existed a quiet, polite, well-understood aversion between her and Mrs. Knighton; and Miss Conway, though her aunt never interfered with her visits, was very chary of them in general. This May, however, her relations had not been long established in their fashionable apartments, before Mrs. Marsden's carriage set her down at their door, in time for luncheon; and her reception was as cordial as if they had always been accustomed to intimacy.

'This is charming, Charlotte!' said Mrs. Knighton, herself a good-looking, well-dressed personage, with a face skilled in wearing as cheerful an aspect as if she had no unmarried daughters, and a purse as ample as her wishes; 'this is delightful! I was just longing for you to come in and tell us all we are dying to know. Is your aunt in town?'

'No, she is in Paris.'

'Paris? True, so you wrote me word—now I remember. And you are on guard in Bryanstone Square, dutiful child. You have it all your own way there, I imagine; so virtue brings its own reward.'

'We are excellent friends, and do not interfere too much with each other.'

'Your excellent friendship would not last long if you did, my dear; but, between ourselves, it must be rather a dull life. I hope you mean to indulge *us* with a little of your spare time this year, till Lady Delaunay returns to monopolize it all. What on earth has taken her to Paris just now? for I have only a confused idea of the whole story.'

'You heard all about Delaunay's exploit and narrow escape, of course.'

'I saw the account in the papers, and there was something afterwards about all the gentlemen receiving medals, was there not? Quite a new step for that good, lazy man to become a hero; I really never expected it of him.'

'I think no one was less prepared for it than himself,' said Miss Conway, smiling; 'meanwhile the consequences are likely to be serious. He begged his mother to meet him at Dover, and she hurried there, and waited week after week, as she would have waited for no one else; and at last heard that he had fallen in with friends who were going on to Paris, and go with them he must, and his mother must join him, for reasons many and cogent. So to Paris she went, and there she is still, and will remain, no doubt, as long as he pleases.'

'You make me really curious; what might be one of these weighty reasons? Is it permitted to inquire?'

'Do you know the Camerons?'

The question was superfluous, for Mrs. Knighton knew everybody.

'To be sure; I liked poor Lady Emily very much. I see Sir Duncan is come home at last to take care of his daughters, and high time too. You smile—you don't mean there has been anything going on there—really? Not the eldest—not Frances, surely?'

'Frances herself. Delaunay rather admired her last year, but she never encouraged him in the least; however, his bravery made him appear in a new and more interesting light, I suppose. At any rate, they became friends somewhere in their travels, and in short, Lady Delaunay found she was to pronounce judgment, and seems to be well satisfied; so there will not be much to wait for, though nothing is officially announced as yet.'

Upon my word, Miss Cameron has managed well. It is very odd how worldly-wise those very good young ladies always prove in the end. I wonder if the hero would have been as irresistible without the coronet and fortune. She has not much of the last herself, I know; but your aunt will not mind that. She is quite after her own heart; one of the new-pattern saints, who, twenty years ago, would have worn a poke bonnet, and made soup and flannel petticoats for old women, and collected pence for the missionaries; but as that is old-fashioned, she goes to church on saints' days, and illuminates missals, and all that sort of thing. Poor dear Lord Delaunay! His mother has let him go his own quiet way so long, what will he do with a stirring, energetic wife? You know she is said to have been quite a mother to her sisters after poor Lady Emily's death; and of all terrible things for an easy, indolent man, is one of your wonderfully useful young lady managers, who will insist on keeping the world in order, as if nothing went right before they were born. Not that any of my girls will ever trouble anybody in that way; for they never know the price of a single thing but the gloves they lose at Ascot.'

The announcement of luncheon interrupted the conversation at this point, and it was not resumed till Miss Conway was alone with her friend in her dressing-room before taking leave.

'I wanted to ask something more particularly,' said Mrs. Knighton; 'but before the girls and the servants, I thought it better to wait. What was that I heard about your cousin's meeting with her mother? Is the *mésalliance* to be pardoned after all?'

'I can hardly tell how it will end. My aunt was laid up in the country, at the house of Adelaide's father-in-law, and among them they worked upon her feelings, and she had no choice but to relax; not in favour of Adelaide, so much as of her little boy, whom she brought away with her, and will, I suppose, provide for.'

'Do you mean that his mother has given him up to her entirely?'

'That is just what I asked her when I last wrote, and all the reply she makes is, that whatever her mother wishes is to be done. Hunger will tame a lion, they say; and certainly the discomfort and wretchedness of her present life have marvellously tamed *her*, if this lasts.'

'Really, I think she is very sensible about it; it is securing a provision for the child, and getting a hold on Lady Delaunay at the same time. It shows more prudence than I should have expected from a lady who made such a mistake in life as hers. But what are those Lyndons like? Are any of them presentable?'

'Hardly I should say, from one specimen I have seen.'

'What *will* your aunt do with them? They will be a perpetual thorn in her side.'

'Just what I have thought all along, and think still,' said Miss Conway; 'but it cannot be helped.'

'My dear, Lady Delaunay will never bear it; charitable ladies, who, can be sisters and mothers of charity to their pensioners, dislike that sort of people quite as much as we wicked, worldly folks, who pretend to nothing of the kind. She and her daughter will quarrel in a week; unless, indeed, Lady Adelaide has become a model of saintly temper, which no Chester ever was yet. If she is wise, she will not let her pride stand in her way; for, of course, her mother will have a good deal to leave.'

'Not so much as you would suppose. Churches and charities have consumed a great deal of her fortune.'

'Ah, that is a dreadfully expensive mania, that I can never see the use of. Why good people are to ruin themselves and their belongings to build all these churches, when we have more now than we want, and plenty of dissenting chapels into the bargain, is quite beyond my comprehension; but it is the fashion now, and people will do it, just as if what was enough for our grandfathers would not be enough for us. But I hope, my dear Charlotte, out of all this, *your* claims have not been forgotten?'

'My claims? Dear Mrs. Knighton, what have I to expect beyond a remembrance, that I wish I may never receive?'

'Of course, my dear, we all feel that; but I do not know who has, if you have not. You seem to do pretty well what you like in Bryanstone Square, already. I would wager something very handsome, if I could afford it, that you are all right in *that* quarter, and know it. Do give some charming parties when you come into your fortune. That house only wants new furnishing.'

'How can you talk so, dearest Mrs. Knighton?' I only wish I saw a prospect of ever making some return for all the kindnesses you have shown me, I am sure. There is three o'clock striking; I really must go, and with all you have to do, I know you will not be sorry.'

'Since you say that, I will not let you go at all, unless you promise to devote yourself to us a little more than you ever have done yet. Go with us to the Botanical Gardens to-morrow. We will not mind dear Lady Delaunay. I know, in a civil, parliamentary way, she hates the very sight of me, but I won't poison your fresh young innocence more than is absolutely necessary. I am quite sure, by the way, that my guess is a shrewd one.'

Miss Conway laughed, and turned the subject, and after an amicable arrangement had been agreed upon as to time and place, and other plans for meeting, she departed. Mrs. Knighton glanced

from the window as she drove off in Mrs. Marsden's carriage which had come to fetch her according to her orders, and shook her head with a sagacious smile.

'Take my word for it,' she said to her daughters, 'Charlotte Conway is to be Mrs. Marsden's heiress. I know it by her manner. My dears, we must contrive this season to see as much of her as possible : she has sense and tact enough to make it a very desirable intimacy for you. I will call on the poor old lady forthwith. It would be a very convenient thing to have that house to put up at, sometimes, though it is a long way off : for these expensive quarters grow dearer every year. One must keep up with the times, but it costs a great deal of money.'

There had been a crisis in Miss Conway's life, when the revulsion of feeling from dread to relief, had wellnigh won her to resolve on a different course—on ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, if only to protect herself from such another interval of misery. This was, when she first heard of the exploit of Lord Delaunay and Maurice Randolph : and by the thrill of comfort in knowing she had, after all, injured neither, first realized what she had been enduring, and how narrowly she had escaped. The mercy was so great, so undeserved, it seemed to claim a return ; and an impulse, that had she yielded to, might have redeemed her whole moral being, urged her now, before it was too late, to throw off the long-accumulated load of deceit and wrong, and bear the shame for the sake of the peace of confession and atonement. But it was resisted, and, as always follows on such resistance, the evil grew harder than before. Her hatred of Maurice Randolph had become as intense as her affection had once been, and added tenfold to the bitterness with which she regarded her rival. Never should they stand triumphantly by, looking on, while she lay in the dust—never ! She was too strong for them yet, and they should find her so. She stood so deeply committed in hostility, that it was now war to the knife, and there was nothing she was not prepared to brave and to do, when she thought of her own passionate appeal, and his parting look of contempt.

With regard to the position of affairs between Lady Delaunay and Adelaide, she had been inclined to believe from the first that, sooner or later, they must come together. Even when the latter, was left behind at Cannymoor, she only considered it in the light of a reprieve. Her aunt's manner during the short time they were together, on her way through town, had made her uneasy : she seemed to dread asking questions, as if her trust had been shaken against her will ; and actually did put some that had required all her presence of mind to answer. Besides, she had told her at



parting, that there were subjects which she meant to talk over with her on her return—subjects that concerned the happiness of them all: and though her tenderness was perhaps warmer than usual, as if her very doubts showed her how dear her niece had become, Miss Conway's conscience was too well-informed not to find this an unsatisfactory matter for cogitation. But she had great faith in delay, and her own fertility of resource, that had never failed her yet, as well as in the good fortune that, more or less, generally attended her devices.

The present state of things seemed to justify her confidence. Randolph was disabled from interference; Delaunay, though he had written one short vehement remonstrance, that had looked as if he meant to take vigorous measures, seemed to have forgotten all about it, and be absorbed in his own private matters; Adelaide was undergoing a trial of patience which did not look encouraging for the future, even if it should end in her being received at home, as a repentant prodigal, dependent on the bounty of those who had so long neglected her. It would require little skill to foresee, that out of such a reconciliation would spring up bitterness enough to prevent any alarm on the score of her influence, had Miss Conway possessed no other secret source of satisfaction. As it was, she could calmly speculate on the result, confident that her own interests were beyond its control. Mrs. Knighton's knowledge of the world and of worldly physiognomies, had not deceived her. In the course of some of her indefatigable, but weary researches after the third packet of letters, Miss Conway had discovered a will, in which Mrs. Marsden left her residuary legatee; and as her income was large, and she had never spent a third of it, the succession appeared noble enough to afford solid and satisfactory comfort, strengthening her mind for everything else that might befall.

Mrs. Marsden was alone when she entered, sitting in the half-dozing attitude in which she now passed most of the day. She was much weaker and much more infirm than she had been, and seemed to take less heed of what went on round her. Miss Conway truly said they did not interfere with each other; for she seldom opposed anything she did, allowing her guest to control her household, and use her carriage as she pleased; and rarely alluding to family matters. People said she was breaking fast; Miss Conway thought so herself, but as there was nothing particular to describe, she saw no reason for not writing cheerfully to Lady Delaunay on the subject. There was no use in making her dear aunt uneasy before there was absolute necessity; and till Mrs. Marsden complained, what could anybody do? So she kept the house, and employed her carriage and servants, and was affectionate and attentive when they were together, but saw no occasion for shutting herself up

with her all day ; it would only be harassing to them both. This morning she had been absent longer than usual, and came in with a smile of apology, which changed into surprise at the sharp manner with which her old friend turned round to ask, ' Why do you let that old gentleman come calling here on me ? I don't like him, and don't want him. He is a low-bred, busy man, who talks a deal of stuff about what doesn't concern him, and I won't have him coming any more.'

' Who *do* you mean, dear Mrs. Marsden ?

' That Mr. Spindler, from Cannymoor.'

' Has he called again ? Dear me, I am sorry you were annoyed. I have tried to be civil to him as poor Adelaide's friend, but he is tiresome.'

' Tiresome ? Ada ought to know better than to choose such friends, and you may tell her so. I won't have any of them coming near me, I know that.'

' You are quite right, dear ; and I will take care they do not.'

A few days after, Lady Adelaide Lyndon received one of her cousin's kind, friendly letters, in which, after expressing her satisfaction that from all accounts little Walter was thoroughly contented and happy with his grandmamma, she observed, ' You are really a *model* mother, to be able to give him up so quietly, and I admire you more than I can say ; for after all, his interests are the first consideration ; and as it is only romance to expect boys to care for nobody but their mammas all their lives, you could not have untied the pet-apron string in a safer manner. I do not think *I* could bear it as you do ; but you are wiser than I am in some things. By the way, your old friend, Mr. Spindler, has been very attentive in calling lately ; and *as* your friend, I have made a point of receiving him civilly ; but poor dear Mrs. Marsden, who, like all old people, gets fanciful and querulous at times, took a dislike to something in his manner, and desired me to tell you she would not have your friends coming to tease her any more. You know her way, and that she does not always mean all she says, poor thing ; but I am bound to give my message, and hope you will excuse it. I did my best to make amends ; for, meeting the gentleman in the Botanical Gardens next day, I introduced him to the Knightons (who ask very kindly after you), and both as your friend, and as a wealthy old bachelor, they were quite ready to accept the acquaintance, and have invited him to their next party.'

No reply was made to this letter ; Lady Adelaide for once justified the praise bestowed on her wisdom. It was however alluded to, in one written to Mrs. Henry Lyndon about this time, from which we give some extracts.

‘ I took Henry’s advice, tell him, and put it in the fire unanswered. As he was so angry with me for neglecting his other warning, I hope he will give me credit for this. If he should see Mr. Powys, perhaps he would ask him to explain how entirely Mr. Spindler’s intrusion is without my sanction. I did not even know of it, till informed by my cousin of the use he had made of my name.

‘ As far as I am personally concerned, I trust Henry’s fears about that gentleman’s intentions are misplaced. My father has assured me again and again that I am safe, and I must believe him. As for regretting my imprudence, I can hardly do that, while he tells me it saved his senses—perhaps his life. We think him sadly broken and out of health—painfully irritable sometimes, no doubt from pressure on the brain ; so that poor Penelope’s patience is a good deal tried, and we are all obliged to combine for his amusement as much as possible, and avoid matters of business altogether. It would be a satisfaction to know how we stand, and if necessary, make sacrifices—anything rather than suspense and anxiety ; but he will explain nothing, and allows no questions to be asked—only tells me so often he has taken care of my interests, I should be ashamed to add to his troubles by fears about myself.

‘ You ask how my spirits have kept up. I can only say I am sometimes a wonder to myself ; but I believe it is partly owing to my having too much to do to think about my own wants and wishes as much as I did. There has been a good deal of sickness in the village, and some of our hard-working ladies have been laid up ; so that *faute de mieux*, I have been entrusted with some of their labour. This, added to the necessary duties at home, and the supervision of my two maidens at the Rectory, who are improving visibly, but require looking after, keeps me tolerably well occupied all day. If I ever grow desponding, it is at night ; but it is so ungrateful to give way to this, after all I have received, that I do my best to resist, and, when sleep is impossible, take refuge in a book.

‘ Dr. Home has heard at last from Mr. Randolph ; he was progressing favourably, though still a sufferer from rheumatic pains, and too weak for much exertion. His young French friend’s mother and sisters were the kindest of nurses, but inexorable in their discipline, and would only allow him ten minutes’ use of his pen. How thankful I am that he is recovering, I cannot express. By the time he returns, I hope my brother will be in England, and that all will then be cleared up and explained between them. My mother, I know, will not rest till that is done, and on her I rely.

‘ My darling boy is very good about writing, and seems so well and happy, that I try to feel glad he is away while Cannymoor is in this sickly state. I enclose you his letter, and if you criticise

it, take care how you show me my little playmate's correspondence when you are separated for the first time. I do not covet the trial for you. How long ours is to last, I dare not think. I try not to count the days, or to indulge visionary hopes, as they only make the delay more difficult to bear.

'Mrs. Dalton has taken the large cottage next to the Balls, which was vacant by old Phillips' death ; and has devoted herself to preparing a kind of refuge for vagrant children. She has already found four or five, with the help of Abner, and Sergeant Wade, who takes wonderful interest in the enterprise, and will, I think, prove of great service in its ultimate success. She lodges, boards, clothes, and teaches the children, and looks happier since she has had such an occupation. Her own little grandchild was baptized last Sunday, and the sergeant was present. He goes regularly to church now, whenever it is open ; and often basks in the sun in the churchyard, especially when Mr. Ousel is practising on the organ, who is very good to him, and plays what he finds pleases him best, instead of his own more scientific studies. I am afraid, in strictest confidence, it is done partly to please me ; but it gives the old man so much comfort, I cannot afford to quarrel with the young one.

'My mother's presents have given universal satisfaction *here*. I am very glad you were pleased with yours. It came from a heart that can appreciate you, and whose gratitude and esteem you richly deserve.'

The presents alluded to had been sent over from Paris, and were tasteful, appropriate, and well chosen ; the value disguised beneath the elegance, so as to avoid all appearance of more munificence than was consistent with respect. Penelope wrote in rapturous praise of the manner in which they had all been remembered, and the charming letter that accompanied the gifts. It was the pleasantest topic she had to discuss, for she took a more gloomy view of things than Adelaide, and was severely shaken by the state of her father's mind, and the dread of what might be coming upon them all. She owned that it was so, and what they should have done lately without Adelaide, nobody could tell. Adelaide was the comfort of the whole house, and of the village into the bargain ; always thinking what she could do for everybody but herself ; making time for everything ; so sweet-tempered with her father, such a help in the accounts and housekeeping, so pleasant to all the neighbours ; nobody would believe she could be the same person. She had declined being one of the committee at present, but did all the work of those who were laid up ; and when old Mrs. Grayling was confined to her room, went every day to read her

favourite novels to her, and the dear old soul had talked of nothing else ever since. She said, the tone of her ladyship's voice, when she read the *dénouement* scene in *Rotten Row*, where Prince Stromboli turned out to be the long-lost brother of Lord Montague de Courcy, was enough to melt a heart of stone. 'My only fear is,' Miss Lyndon added, 'that like all energetic people, now she has begun, she will overdo her usefulness, and work herself into another fever. She takes long walks with Miss Brittan and Sophy, and these I encourage, as they do her good, though I am afraid she is teaching half the time; for they have caught the mania for making collections of nobody knows what, and come home with baskets full of rubbish, which I take good care shall pass on to the Rectory. Dr. Home has been so occupied among his people, the girls have rather become a responsibility to Adelaide, but she never seems to mind it.'

Among the families who suffered from the prevalent sickness was that of Mrs. Ball, who had one after another laid up, till she was nearly laid up herself. The baby, in particular, had a hard struggle for its little life, and a message sent in despair to the Rectory, to know if the good gentleman had left any of his wonderful stuff behind him, reaching it when Adelaide was there, led to her going at once, to see if she could be of any use. Whether it was owing to her remedies, or to her visits, she never presumed to say, but the child *did* recover, and she had the credit of it; and her popularity, which had been on the rise some little time, was established at once on the highest pinnacle. She might have prescribed nose of Turk and Tartar's lips, and they would have been taken with enthusiasm three times a day; but she infinitely preferred kitchen medicine where it was available; and a drop of soup, or a bit of chicken, brought by my lady's own hands, was found to have wonderful effect in rebuilding a shattered constitution. Lady Adelaide had so completely repudiated her old theory, that she had nothing to do with the people, nor they with her—that when taxed with it by the old rector, she stood out that she had never said anything of the kind, and maintained it in defiance of all argument.

How much she suffered in her solitary moments during this period—how often, as day after day, week after week, went by, the hope deferred made her heart sick with longing; that hope she had secretly cherished almost unawares, of the spell her boy's winning face would work in obtaining her speedy and complete reconciliation—no one knew; it was a subject on which she would bear no question. Its only trace was in her kindness to Lilla Brittan, as if she felt her to be a link with her mother, and a pledge of her love; but no one ever heard a murmur, or saw her shed a tear.

After a long continuance of the dry wind that had been charged with being the main cause of the epidemic in Cannymoor, there came a sudden change to heavy rains, with very little intermission, causing floods in some parts of the country, and raising a cloud of those cheerful prognostications for the future, wherein the national mind takes so much delight—whether they concern corn, fruit, or grass. It might have been any month but May, when one evening, towards the end of it, the party at the Manorhouse were surprised by a visit from Mr. Ousel; an honour rather sparingly bestowed, and by no means looked for on so wet a night. Mr. Lyndon, who had been in one of his moods of silent gloom all day, received him so indifferently, the ladies were perforce obliged to be more hospitable than usual. He seemed in a state of considerable excitement, and nervously unable to give it vent; and it was not till Lady Adelaide, taking pity upon him for the sake of past services, had gradually talked him into feeling more at ease, that he ventured to open the matter on which he had come.

Did she know that those cottagers on the moor, Wade's and others, where she visited so kindly, had been offered for sale, and that Mr. Spindler had been negotiating the purchase, that he might pull them all down?

'Indeed,' she said, with a sorrowful smile, 'I did hear of it; for the sergeant thought I might be able to prevent it, which is quite out of the question.'

'Perhaps you are aware that it is all part of—that it formerly belonged to—this estate?'

'Well, sir, what of that?' asked Mr. Lyndon, turning sharply. He had not heeded the first remark, but this roused him directly.

'Only, sir, that—that—that might account for Mr. Spindler's being so anxious to secure it.'

Mr. Lyndon sighed heavily, threw himself back in his chair, and relapsed into silence. Lady Adelaide hastened to draw the guest's attention back to herself.

'I have been in great trouble about the poor people,' she said, 'especially Sergeant Wade; as there seemed to be no thought of showing them any kind of consideration, and they were taking it quite to heart.'

'I know they were, and *that*, I know, would grieve one of such a fibre as yours,' he began softly, but meeting her grave eye, went on in a more commonplace tone; 'Sergeant Wade told me Mr. Spindler had a grudge against him, and he guessed why; and that he had sworn he would not have a house in the place made a nest for tramps, like Mrs. Dalton's. He had had proposals about a new public-house, and he meant to build one there.'

‘He is just fit to keep it himself,’ muttered Mr. Lyndon,—‘the precious scoundrel!’

The young man looked a hearty assent to the epithet. It gave him courage to go on.

‘I have, however, ventured, hoping to relieve suspense and anxiety, to call and let you know—in short, I have forestalled Mr. Spindler; I have completed the purchase myself to-day. Your poor friends need not be afraid of being turned out just yet, Lady Adelaide.’

‘Oh, thank you—thank you!’ she said, in a tone of great relief, and with a warm smile of gratitude that made him tingle from head to foot; ‘you have brought good news indeed. I am *very* glad.’

The others joined in expressions of satisfaction; only Mr. Lyndon remained silent, his mouth twitching convulsively. The young man glanced at him in nervous anxiety, and went on, in some agitation of voice, ‘It is only right I should explain; it is not on my own account entirely—I am authorized by a friend. He was sure this man wanted to buy up all the property that he could, and I promised in his absence to prevent it, if possible. His object and mine are identical—simply to hold the property as a trust till Mr. Lyndon or his natural heir is disposed to redeem it; and any terms the Squire might like to suggest, I am sure there would not be a moment’s hesitation——’

Mr. Lyndon burst in on the faltering speech with a vehemence that startled them all. ‘Young man, you might as well expect me to offer terms for the crown of England! It is mockery, insult, to talk to me of redeeming the estate now; it will all be his sooner or later, and then he will be content.’

He covered his face with his hands, and his daughters were terrified to hear his deep, passionate sobs. Penelope went up to him, trying to sooth him by caresses, and Mr. Ousel hastily rose to retire. Lady Adelaide, who felt something to be due for his courtesy, attended him to the door with gentle expressions of gratitude and apology; her father’s health must be their excuse; she was sure his own kindness of heart would prompt him not to mention to any one what he had witnessed. He held the hand she offered with a lingering grasp, and felt he could have stood there for ever.

‘Do you remember,’ he whispered hurriedly, ‘a warning I once gave you? I see you do. It may be coming true sooner than you thought. If it does, if you find vulgar persecution carried beyond your patience, give him *this*,’ he put a sealed letter with a blank envelope into her hand. ‘It will silence him, at any rate. Nay, you may trust me,’ he added, with a rather piteous smile,

observing her reluctance to receive so mysterious a document; 'it is only Piercie Shafton's bodkin, but it will thrust home: keep it by you against an emergency. Oh, Lady Adelaide—' he bent over her hand as if he longed to press it to his lips, 'if I could only serve you in any way—if I might—if *money*—'

Her look silenced him—he dropped her hand, bowed, and rushed out into the driving rain.

She was glad her sisters were too much engaged to notice or comment on this confidential colloquy, and put the letter aside for the present, half vexed that she had taken it, and resolved to return it next day. Her attention was now called to her father's condition, which dismayed her not a little. His agitation was evidently the result of suppressed suffering, and when he mustered resolution to meet her eye, the despair in his own chilled her with dread. Henry's warnings—Penelope's anxiety—if they were well founded, after all, and he had deceived himself and her—what was to be done? But there was no time to think of her own difficulties: he must be soothed and quieted, or his night's rest was gone; and they had just succeeded, at last, in restoring him to some degree of composure, when a violent ring at the bell, and then a hasty step in the hall, announced another visitor. By instinct all knew who this was, before Mr. Spindler was announced.

Latterly, whenever this gentleman had favoured them with his company, he had shown a great disposition to be more patronizing to the ladies than they thought at all necessary or agreeable, but as it only took the form of over-civility, it afforded no tangible matter for complaint. But this evening they could see at a glance there would be no offence given in that shape: he could hardly master his rage sufficiently to exchange a word of greeting, and as he took his seat, his muddy boots and splashed dress (for which he offered no apology) suited well with the sullen glare of hostility with which his eyes moved slowly round the circle, resting with the most emphatic determination on the Squire and his son's widow.

'You have had a visitor before me, I think?' was his first remark.

'Yes,' retorted Penelope, whom the dirty boots had affronted considerably; 'I cannot imagine what the pleasure can be of making calls in such weather, and so late: but if people will catch cold, it is their own fault. I am afraid, Mr. Spindler, your feet must be wet?'

'No fear of that—soles an inch thick, with plenty of nails: no foolish dancing pumps for me, thank ye, Miss Lyndon. I leave that for Ousel. So he must needs spoil my market, must he?—that is to say, he and Randolph; for it has been a regular planned thing between them, I find; and this young fellow has taken up a



tone with me that I won't stand, any more than I will his spyings and meddling. I won't indeed. I only *hope* his new purchase may prove a good speculation. If he parts with it, I recommend him to take care who is the next purchaser, that's all—since he is so sharp and clever at a bargain. Now, Mr. Lyndon, I never talk business before ladies if I can help it, but I suppose there are no secrets here. I am come to ask you——'

'Ring the bell, Lucy,' interrupted her father, hurriedly; 'and ust go and order the lamp to be lighted in my study. I will talk to Mr. Spindler there.'

'It is much the same to me, my dear fellow, where we talk,' said the visitor, as Lucy hastened to obey, 'so long as the matter is thoroughly understood. You know the term is expired, and, of course, are ready.'

'If you will have a moment's patience, I will attend to you as soon as we are alone.'

'Begging your pardon, it strikes me that so plain a remark could be answered one way or another, without all this ceremony. But I see what it is—you want to put me off with excuses, and I won't have it!'

'Spindler, this is not the time or the manner in which we are accustomed to transact business. I am not well to-night, and to be spoken to like this—if you would call to-morrow morning——'

'I'll do nothing of the kind. That young fellow has chosen to thwart me to please you, and so you may take the consequences.'

'You will remember the presence of my daughters, sir, I trust.'

'I do, and I speak out before them on purpose, because they ought to know. It is nonsense and folly, Mr. Lyndon, your trying to put off the evil day as you do. If you were wise enough and man enough to look properly into your affairs, and put them into order in the only way left to you, there might be a chance; but you won't—you cling to the empty show of being the Squire as long as you can, and borrow here and borrow there, with all your capital swallowed up and sunk nobody knows how or where, because you *would* take no advice but your own; and what is the consequence? Why, the house will soon be sold over your head, and I shall buy it, and be master here, as I ought to be; and what will you do? Yes, you may look as savage as you please; it is no fault of mine. I showed you and my Lady Adelaide your condition some time ago, and proposed——'

'Have done, sir, this minute!' cried Mr. Lyndon, starting up, his face scarlet, and his frame quivering; 'one word more of this insulting language, and I will—I will——'

He gasped for breath—reeled—caught and supported himself against the table—and a torrent of blood gushed from his nostrils.

All was confusion in a moment ; and before Mr. Spindler was aware, a light firm hand was laid upon his arm, and he was conducted outside the door.

‘Go into the study, sir,’ said Lady Adelaide, in a voice he durst not disobey ; ‘and I will come to you.’

She hastened back to Mr. Lyndon ; the flow of blood had already relieved his brain, but it was some little time before it could be stopped, and he was too faint for any exertion. He caught his daughter-in-law’s hand, however, and pressed it earnestly, while his lips murmured something like an entreaty for pardon. She bent over him, with a calmness that helped to restore his own.

‘You need not speak, only make a sign. Will you give me full permission to act as I think best ?’

He laid his hand on her head, and whispered, ‘Whatever you will, only do not sacrifice yourself.’ She smiled and left the room. In rather less than half-an-hour they heard the hall door shut, and she returned alone. Mr. Lyndon partly rose from the sofa to read her face ; it betrayed nothing, except by a slight glow on the cheeks ; and when he began to reproach himself, she checked him with a gentle caress.

‘Hush, there is nothing for me to forgive ; only try and listen to me quietly. I have already done all that I could to help you, except one thing—my last resource. If this fails, I can do no more, and we must face the worst bravely ; but till it has been tried, we may hope for the best. All I ask is for you to keep yourself composed, for all our sakes ; or you will take away our strength just when we want it most.’

He felt the force of this appeal, and yielded to their united persuasions to go to bed at once, on condition they would all do the same. His sanguine temper had already built a tower of hopes on the one she had held out ; and feeling easier, though much exhausted, he felt sure he should sleep better than he had done for a fortnight.

Not till he *was* asleep, however, could his anxious daughters rest ; it was no longer a time for secrecy ; and Adelaide had that to tell which it behoved Penelope to hear, though it filled her with dismay. She sat pondering over it in silence some time before she could make any comment. Bad as she knew the state of things to be, she had never dreamed of this.

‘And what have you settled with the man, now ?’ she asked, at last.

‘Well, I have obtained a week’s respite for deliberation.’

‘And what will deliberation do for you, my poor sister ?’

‘It gives me time, Penelope ; and in your father’s state that is worth something, even if my last resource fails.’

'What is that resource? Not Mr. Randolph again?'

'Could you suppose it for a moment? But no—do not ask me until it has been tried, or my courage may fail. It will require all I have.'

Penelope held her hand fast, as she was moving towards her own room, and looked earnestly in her face.

'It seems very hard you should have all our troubles as well as your own on your shoulders. I am afraid, do you know, it was a bad bargain for you coming among us at all!'

'Penelope, you received me, welcomed me, shared all you had with me, when my own stood afar off; and I repaid you very ill, and did nothing to make you happier; but I was so unhappy myself. If you can forgive all the trouble I gave you then—'

Her sister-in-law's hearty kiss broke off the sentence.

'There were faults on both sides, and mine were the worst, for I was old enough to know better. You are much better looking than I am, and when you like, can be twice as agreeable; and the long and short of the matter was, I was jealous of you. There—it's out at last. I made your life miserable—I know I did; and I often said things of you in a pet, that I was sorry for afterwards, and am still more sorry now. It has been on my mind some time, and I can keep it no longer; but I am afraid I spoke ill-naturedly about you to Mr. Randolph the first night he was here; you had put me out by your manner, and I thought you were showing off before him how you despised all of us, and I felt spiteful, and said a great deal I had better have let alone, for I know now it was exaggerated. While we are talking of forgiving, will you forgive *that*?'

It required a little magnanimity; but though Adelaide could not find voice to answer, her sisterly kiss was warm and sincere, and they separated, each feeling the better for the voluntary act of self-abasement; though neither was aware that this eventful night would be the last, for many weeks, they would pass under the same roof.

Adelaide, when she found herself alone, sat down and trembled in every limb. Penelope's acknowledgment had suddenly dispelled a shadow that had darkened her spirit ever since that evening. If, indeed, all the petty, ill-natured remarks to which she had been so long inured as hardly to notice them, were repeated to him as a stranger, no wonder that before he had time to investigate their truth, or trace their origin, or weigh their value, he had hastily judged her on their evidence, and despised her too much to pity. It was that which gave the reproachful sting to his words, and the severity to his looks, which had struck her down in her pride like a sword-blow. Yes, and the more he loved her, the more bitter

must his scorn have been. Surely, he had learned to judge more mildly now, or he would not have written as he did. He must have discovered that, with all her faults, she was not what he thought her *then*, when he spoke of a change over heart and nature, more terrible to witness than decay and death! Ah, if he only knew her position *now*—if he, who loved her so devotedly, could but have seen her that evening, compelled to endure with calmness the insult of that man's presence, and having no hope of escape from merciless persecution, but by doing what she was about to do, and would have given anything to avoid—appealing for help to the compassion of her mother!

Yes—that was her last resource, and for Mr. Lyndon's sake, she must try it. It was one more humiliation, one more draught of bitterness—but it must be borne—drained to the dregs; it might give a handle to misrepresentation, and throw discredit on the sincerity of her repentance; but she had no other hope left; and after fortifying herself by prayer, she sat resolutely down, and wrote a full, unreserved statement of the whole affair, as far as she knew it, to Lady Delaunay—throwing herself on her generosity.

'You have urged me to show you confidence,' she added, in conclusion. 'I thought in giving you my boy I had done my utmost: I now do more—I put into your hands the name, the honour, the very existence of his father's house, which I have gone beyond the bounds of prudence to save in vain, and in whose ruin we must all sink together, without your help. If you knew what it cost me to appeal to you, you would form some idea of the magnitude of the peril that goads me on. Were Mr. Lyndon's health and mind in a less fearfully precarious state, I should not do it even now; but his very life trembles in the scale, and I have no resource left but in that magnanimity—which, even if you cannot comply with my petition, will prevent your misconstruing its motives.'

It was late before she closed this letter; for it took her very long to write, and more than once, her heart grew so sick in doing it, she had to pause, and walk up and down the room to recover. The rain dashed against her window, and a branch of a creeping rose, buffeted by the storm, beat wildly with dripping leaves upon the pane, like a weeping suppliant at an inexorable door. But within the house all had been for some time at rest, except herself; and she, at last, laid her head on her pillow, and slept heavily, as worn-out nature sleeps, and yet even then, oppressed by the images of the cares that harassed her waking.

That battered spray of the rose, which had seemed so true an emblem of her own state, haunted her in her dreams, seeming now

like a spirit's beckoning hand—now the face of a friend who died when she was a child—now the malicious grin of Mr. Spindler, as he had quitted her that night;—now, laughing and joyous, with the rain-drops glittering in his flying curls, her boy Walter, triumphantly repeating what she had once heard him mutter in a dream of his own, 'Never fear, mamma—I'll pull you up!'

There was a sudden light in her room; her eyes opened. Penelope was standing by the bed, a paper in one hand, and a candle in the other; her face deadly pale, and bathed in tears that she was trying hard to stop or hide.

'Oh my dear, dear Adelaide! You must get up directly. I am so sorry for you—and such a night too! Read this.'

And she held the light, while Adelaide's trembling hands unfolded the telegraphic missive, that daunts the heart of the most intrepid:—'The station-master at Lilford is requested to send a carriage and four express to Cannymoor Manorhouse, to bring back Lady Adelaide Lyndon. Her son is ill in London.'

Lady Adelaide read, laid it down, and looked up. 'Does my father know?' she asked, with strange quietness.

'No; there is not a sound in his room; only Lucy and I were awoke by the bell.'

'Then do not let him be disturbed. You can tell him in the morning. What o'clock is it?' She had risen while she spoke, and was dressing rapidly, yet with no outward signs of agitation.

'Just two; quite dark still. The postboys say they have had great difficulty in getting here, the waters are so much out; and they will be obliged to return by another road. Is there anything I can do to help you?'

A shake of the head was the only reply, so Miss Lyndon asked no more, but hurried off to give as many orders and directions as possible, by way of relief. When she came back, Adelaide's small portmanteau was packed, and she was kneeling with her head bowed in her hands. Her sister stood in reverential pity, waiting till she rose; but when she did so, and turned her pale, mournful face, and tearless eyes, that seemed to gaze without seeing, Penelope's firmness gave way; she rushed forwards, and clasped her close, sobbing out her sympathy, and her hopes of all ending well.

'Yes, dear, yes,' she added, seeing Adelaide's eyes wandering wistfully round the room, as if she was trying to recollect some last request she had to make; 'I will take care of everything; no one shall come near the room but myself, and not a thing shall be moved out of its place, I promise you. I fully expect we shall soon have you both back again, unless they like you too well to part with you, and then we shall have to come after you. Those

keys? yes, I will keep them safe, all right; and look here, I insist on your taking my leather bag that Emma gave me—it will hold all your odds and ends, all these letters, and everything—there, put on your bonnet, and I will pack them all in. You will find it delightfully convenient, and monstrous heavy, but that doesn't matter; it is stocked with everything you can want, and ever so many queer things besides.'

Talking briskly and bustling about, so as to prevent the appearance of being frightened, was, she thought, the only way to keep up Adelaide's spirits. Adelaide hardly seemed to hear; she went on quickly, but mechanically, completing her preparations; but when her sister put the precious leather bag into her hand and begged her, for all their sakes, to try not to be cast down, she looked at her for a moment, with that same dreamy expression in her eyes, as if they were watching something far away; and then thanked her, with a smile that nearly broke Miss Lyndon's heart. She took her arm, and led her into the parlour, where Lucy, crying all the while, had got hot coffee ready, and sandwiches and biscuits to be put into her bag, and wraps enough to smother her piled upon all the chairs. Their earnest entreaties made her struggle against the aching in her throat, and try to swallow a small quantity of the beverage so kindly prepared: and then the postboys, who had been partaking of something rather more stimulating, announced that they were ready. One silent embrace—and amid the tears and sobs of mistresses and servants, the widow passed from her husband's home into the darkness and storm without.

As the carriage rattled through the village, more than one ear was startled, and a head or two peered at bedroom window-panes to see the lamps flash past; but one only emerged, thrusting a red night-cap boldly out into the rain. 'Hulloa! hulloa there! post-boy! Who is it? What's the matter?'

'Express—Telegraph!' was all the reply. Lady Adelaide caught a glimpse of the face; whether it saw hers, she could not tell, and soon forgot to conjecture. One thought absorbed all besides.

To attempt to penetrate the sanctuary of that lonely suffering, to describe in words how it was endured, would be useless, if it were well to try. She was not alone—that is all we know; and prayer and patience can give to slender frames and quivering nerves the strength that lies silently on the rack, or stands serenely while the flames are rising.

It was a fearful journey, with the gusts of rain that swept across the open country as if it would drown man and horse, beating into the chaise, in spite of the closed windows—the rather that one was cracked, and the other had a triangular fragment

missing ; but what was worse, it was a tedious one ; the road they were compelled to take was long and heavy, and the latter part principally up-hill. The clocks were striking five when they drew up at the Lilford station. It was too early for the first train, but there was a small hotel and livery-stable connected with the railway, from which the post-chaise had been sent ; and Lady Adelaide was shown into the deserted coffee-room, where a sleepy waiter presently made believe—first to light a fire, which persisted in showing nothing but smoke—and then, in a feeble way, to put chairs and tables into something like order. It was still raining heavily, though the wind had fallen since sunrise ; the outer world looked dreary in the extreme, and Lady Adelaide stood over the inhospitable grate, and shivered as if it had been November instead of May. So long as she had been actually in motion, there was some relief from the goading terror of being too late, which, though unacknowledged even to herself, had struck her like a death-blow from the first ; but this waiting was dreadful. She could only murmur, again and again, the petition for help and resignation which had been her impulse at first, and her resource ever since. To suffer her mind to dwell on the images that thrust themselves before it at every instant, would be, she was well aware, to unfit herself for exertion ; and yet, as often as she struggled to rouse herself from despair, and to bring trust and hope to shine on the gloom of her dread, as often the face of her boy would flash upon her, and the agony had all to be renewed.

She walked up and down ; she went out upon the railway platform, as if in faint hope of hurrying the decrees of Bradshaw ; a few workmen and porters were standing about, and her appearance, striking in its elegance, in spite of her well-worn mourning, drew more than one glance of curiosity. A policeman, at last, came up to offer his services, and hearing her story, which was told in very few words, showed a great deal of sympathy ; begged her to go back to the fire, and he would come and attend to her as soon as it was time—and looked as if he really longed to comfort her if he could. His eyes followed her as she went back, and he shook his head significantly.

‘Where be she from?’ asked a workman, with his oil-can in his hand, who had stopped to hear what passed.

‘I can tell you,’ said a porter, who had slipped into the hotel to inquire ; ‘a telegraph came down in the night from London to send for her, because her son is ill ; she is Lady Somebody Something, though she has no servant with her, and only one bit of a portmanteau. I thought she was something out of the common way, by her walk.’

‘Poor soul!’ said the policeman, who had sick children of his

own; 'I was sure she looked as if she had seen better days, and was not made to rough it. I say, mind she has a carriage to herself, if you can manage it; and let no one go near it to plague her, do you hear?'

The fire had at last begun to justify its name, and Lady Adelaide, as she resumed her seat, found the warmth renovate her chilled frame. The hotel was beginning to show signs of life, and she was offered several civilities; all of which, however, she declined. While she was still waiting there, a Shareham chaise dashed up to the station, out of which a little old gentleman, in a brown great-coat, sprang hastily, tugged his bag out after him, and was paying in a violent hurry—when one of the postboys who had driven the express, civilly told him he was in very good time, the train was not ready yet. This seemed to calm his spirits considerably, and after brief consideration, he took the postboy aside, and talked to him in a confidential whisper for a few minutes, evidently making a great impression on his auditor. This duty accomplished, he hurried to the platform.

'Train not starting yet, policeman?'

'No, sir; not for a quarter of an hour.'

'All right; I have had a race for it, and was afraid I should be too late. Keep an eye on that bag, will you? Sharpish weather for the end of May? Can one get a drop of anything hot anywhere here?'

'Yes, sir; first door on the right.'

Mr. Spindler thanked him, and lost no time in availing himself of the opportunity. In the meanwhile, the postboy, to whom he had given the alarm, went in quest of Lady Adelaide to be paid; a demand which disconcerted her not a little, as it had never occurred to her, in the agitation of setting off, to examine the state of her finances; and on taking out her purse, she found she had not much more than was required for her railway ticket. She offered them what she had, promising more as soon as she reached town; but after the hint they had received, 'to look sharp about getting their money,' they did not like this at all, and grew very surly. They had driven as hard as they could, were half-drowned with the rain, and their beasts knocked up, and now they were to be put off like this, and they didn't understand it. She grew nervous and distressed, and they got more than half the contents of her purse; but were hardly gone, when the master of the livery-stables, whom the same hint had just reached, came in, full of alarm lest he should have been too hasty in complying with the order from the station-master, and presenting an exorbitant bill for immediate payment. A nervous terror of being detained took away her presence of mind; and her evident distress increased



the peremptoriness of her creditor. She assured him Lord Delaunay, whose address she offered to write, would settle immediately on her arrival; he replied, that was all very well, but he had never seen his lordship, and knew nothing about him, and perhaps his lordship might refuse to pay; at any rate, he had had a hint that looked like it, and it would be satisfactory if part of the bill were paid on the spot—that was all. She took out her watch; it was so nearly time to go, that if she waited to appeal to the station-master, she might be too late—anything rather than that. Perhaps if she offered her watch—it was gold—it would be sufficient for the present. The livery-stable keeper looked rather ashamed when she unfastened and put it into his hand. Yes, that was more like business certainly; he didn't mean to be uncivil, only—and with more politeness than he had shown before, he left the room, not quite easy in his own mind that he might not have been making a worse mistake this time than the first. At the door he ran against a tall gentleman, who had been an attentive witness, though unobserved, of the whole transaction. 'Ah, sir! wet morning. Shareham coach, sir, I think? Your place was taken last night; but there is a return chaise going back, if you prefer it.'

The gentleman made no answer, but beckoned him imperatively aside; and while they were arguing some point in whispers, the policeman came to look for Lady Adelaide and her portmanteau.

'Time to go, ma'am—my lady—but no need to hurry; trust to me. First class, of course?'

'Oh, no,' she said hurriedly; 'I have not money enough left; I was not prepared for the expense of the express, and as it is, have been obliged to leave my watch. Never mind, only let me go on. It does not matter how.'

'Yes, but it does, ma'am; and I wonder Mr. Dawson is not ashamed of himself—that I do. He'll hear of it, I can tell him that. To be so uncivil to a lady! I never heard of such a thing.'

He took her outside while he said this, called a porter to take her portmanteau (it had been her husband's, and had seen plenty of service), asked her to allow him to get her ticket, and before she knew he was gone, was back again, opening the door of a first-class carriage.

'You'll excuse the liberty I have taken, ma'am—my lady—I hope,' putting the ticket into her hand; 'you can send the rest in a money-order by post whenever you please; but it is not weather for a lady to go second-class, and I only hope you'll get there in time, ma'am, that's all. I know what it is, for I've three on 'em sick at home now.'

She tried to speak, but her voice was choked. She put her

pocket-book and pencil into his hand, whispering huskily, 'Your name.' He wrote it at length, 'John Tubbs, C 22, X. Y. Z. Railway.'

'Thank you,' she said, with an effort; 'I shall never forget you. God comfort and bless you in your children.'

Scarcely had she taken her seat, when to her horror she saw Mr. Spindler tearing along the platform; and it flashed across her mind in a moment that he was in search of her. In an agony of fear, such as she had never known in all her perils, she shrank back into her corner, drew down her veil, and held her breath till he had passed—which he did without discovering that the carriage was not empty. The next minute her friend, C 22, came up with a beaming face. 'It's all right, ma'am—my lady; a gentleman who knows you and Lord Delaunay has settled everything with Mr. Dawson, and reprimanded him soundly for his want of civility; and here, my lady, is your watch—and your receipt, too, if you'll please to take them.'

Lady Adelaide was lost in astonishment. Who could this friend be? The policeman could not say; the gentleman had slept there last night, and overheard by accident what had occurred. There was no time now to lose. He had given the guard a hint to look after her ladyship, and to let her have the carriage to herself as much as possible; and so he wished her a good journey, and walked off like a good Samaritan as he was, without waiting for any more thanks.

The train moved on soon after, to her great relief, without Mr. Spindler's finding her out. That gentleman, by a little miscalculation of time, had cheated himself out of a great deal of pleasure. In setting the postboys upon the traveller, he had reckoned upon causing her a little distress; and had intended to step in just in time to enjoy her humiliation, pay her bill, and hand her himself into her place—so insuring her company all the way. A happy provision of railway nature, which keeps all liquids meant for hasty and immediate consumption at boiling point, had just marred this ingenious scheme when success seemed most secure; and the persecuted lady was, for the present, as safe from his attentions as locked doors could make her.

Once more she was going on, and she felt comforted. Those two unexpected pieces of kindness were strengthening in themselves, and she blessed both her benefactors in her heart, for helping her to remember she was not forsaken or alone. And so she endured till ten o'clock. It was a wearily slow train, stopping at every little station on the line; but till that hour, no one molested her. At last, however, they reached one where several people were waiting, and there was a rush for places, time being

very short. She had seen, as they came up, a carriage with a magnificent hammercloth and liveries, setting down a family party; and these were evidently coming to invade her privacy. So long as she escaped Mr. Spindler, the rest signified but little; but it did not seem to be so unimportant to *them*; for the gentleman of the party, an anxious, mild-looking little man, stepped back in great alarm when he saw her, and shook his head as he turned to his daughters. 'It won't do, my dears, it won't do for us; your mamma insists on having a carriage to herself—to ourselves, I mean. Dear, dear, what shall we do? Porter! Guard! can't you get us a carriage to ourselves?'

'Plenty of room here, sir: no other empty. Be quick, sir, if you please.'

'Oh, my dears, my dears! What will your mamma say? What shall we do?'

'Do, papa?' returned a young lady of about seventeen, very fashionably dressed, and with a slightly sharp way of speaking—'why, get in, of course. What harm will it do us? We shall be left behind if we don't;' and suiting the action to the word, in she sprang, stumbling against Lady Adelaide, in her haste, and very nearly sending her parasol into her face, but not thinking her a person to whom apology was necessary. There being no remedy forthcoming, the distressed gentleman handed in his three other daughters—then a little boy, who looked sick and fretful, and began quarrelling with all his sisters about where he should sit—and then got in himself, looking the picture of woe. The guard was going to shut the door.

'Oh, stop, stop—there is another lady coming! Here she comes.' And at the word, a very stout, imposing personage, gorgeously arrayed in silk, velvet, lace, and feathers in abundance, came sailing towards the carriage, leading a fat spaniel in a silver chain, and followed by a maid and footman, to whom she continued to pour forth directions and orders, till they were suddenly seized upon by an impatient official, and hurried away to their respective seats. The lady meanwhile, advanced to the door which the guard still held open. She gave one severe glance at the quiet figure in black, and then another at her lord, which seemed to fulfil his worst anticipations.

'I told you, Mr. P., I wished for an *entire* carriage.'

'Very sorry, ma'am,' said the guard, 'but there is not one to be had. I am afraid we can't let you take in the dog, ma'am—it is objected to in general, and when it is——'

'Didn't I tell you so, Mr. P.? And didn't I *beg* and *pray* you to be here in time, that you might secure a carriage to ourselves, properly—so that this poor dear creature might travel in peace and

comfort, as she is accustomed to do ? But no—nothing would *induce* you to do it, and nothing *ever will*. Then *I* must stay behind—that is all !

‘Perhaps this lady may not object to the dog,’ suggested the guard, eager to end the matter, and seeing the gentleman had not a word to say ; ‘of course if she does not, it can be done.’

‘Is it possible, ma’am,’ said the lady, addressing herself with an air of stately remonstrance to Lady Adelaide, ‘that there can be the slightest objection to my dear little invalid boy having his attached favourite with him in the carriage for a short time ?’

Lady Adelaide, roused from her reverie by this appeal, civilly assured her there was none whatever ; upon which, to the immense relief of all parties, the great lady condescended to get in, and the train went off.

It took a little while to settle themselves, and arrange all their several rights to back seat, front seat, middle seat, and window : during which revolutionary period, the gentle father of the family was shifted, uncomplaining, into all the seats in succession ; but at last order was in some degree established ; the boy and the dog being opposite Lady Adelaide. Then Mrs. P. having planted her battery, opened fire, and a serious cannonade it was, raking the whole group—for never, by *any* chance, being ready for *anything*, and thus causing her the very annoyance they knew she disliked most—that of being exposed to travel with strangers. She did wish, she owned, that railroads had never been invented, and then people who had their own private carriages, could post in comfort wherever they pleased, without being intruded upon ; and on this theme she discoursed at a considerable length—not always audibly, but quite sufficiently so to make her meek husband blush several times and feel, at last, absolutely compelled to offer some slight civility, by way of atonement, to the innocent offender in the corner. At the next stoppage he turned to her with some hesitation. ‘I hope that little boy is not troublesome to you, ma’am ?’

Considering that neither boy nor dog had been still or peaceable, for one instant, ever since they first took that position, such a hope might have been looked upon as wild, to say the least of it ; however, the question was received and responded to with quiet grace, and for the first time Mr. P. had a full view of his fellow-passenger’s countenance. He knew a little more of the world than did his imperious spouse ; and felt there could be no mistake about the gentility, decayed or not decayed, of that face and manner.

‘You are fond of children, perhaps, ma’am ?’

She bowed silently.

‘We have so often been anxious about that young gentleman, that I am afraid he has been rather too much spoilt to remember

always how to behave,' he continued, in a deprecatory tone, which seemed to cause considerable astonishment and displeasure among the rest of the party; the young ladies touched each other, and tittered audibly; their mamma broke in with an emphatic eulogium on darling Hugh's invariable goodness and docility—which was, in turn, cut short by that young gentleman himself, declaring he must have something to eat—where were his cakes?

Ah! where, indeed? Echo might answer, if she happened to be within hearing, as long as she pleased; nobody had time to appreciate the attention; the matter on hand was too serious.

'The basket of cakes and things for dear Hugh, Mr. P. You have it, of course? Well, I do think you might have had *some* thought for this poor darling, if for nobody else; you know he didn't taste a morsel of breakfast, and will be quite ill. If you could not remember such a trifle (of course it is a trifle to *you*, we are quite aware of that), you might at least have told us; and I am sure either of his sisters would have taken care the poor boy had a biscuit, at least, just to keep him from turning faint. How are you, my sweetest boy?'

'Very hungry, and so is Floss. I *must* have some cake,' protested Hugh, 'and I will. I'll call the guard—he'll get me some.'

And half out of the window he would have gone next minute, if Lady Adelaide had not arrested him midway, and with an authoritative gesture, that took him too much by surprise for resistance, sent him back into his seat, just as the train moved on. Upon this, there was nothing left for him to do but to kick her for her pains, and then begin deliberately to roar, deaf to all arguments about refreshment stations that must be reached before long; and the commotion in the family—with an accompaniment obligato performed by Floss, in the shrillest of barks—became positively alarming. At the height of the crisis, Lady Adelaide, pitying the thin, white face of the poor spoilt child, happily remembered the stores with which Lucy had provided her, and begged to offer him what she had. Hugh did not wait for parental leave or apologies; his hands were on the spoil in a minute, and he was soon regaling himself and Floss on sandwiches and biscuits with considerable relish, and in the most charming humour imaginable. His mamma had therefore no choice, but to make a very gracious bend to the accommodating stranger, and say she was very much obliged to her, she was sure.

'A very civil, thoughtful person, really,' she observed aside to her eldest daughter; 'I am quite sorry to take her things—I dare say she will have no other dinner to-day; a governess, or something of that sort, evidently. I will take an opportunity of saying something kind to her before we get out, poor thing.'

The gentleman did not wait so long; he was liberal in his thanks and regrets; adding, with a significant smile, 'I can see, madam, by your indulgence, you are used to these matters; I am sure you have a little boy of your own?'

He was very sorry he asked this question, for her look was answer enough; and after she had shrunk back into her corner, and turned her head to the window, he made no more attempts at conversation.

How slowly the train seemed to move—how endless appeared the stoppages—how difficult it was, sometimes, not to be patient, but to keep up at all—who could attempt to describe? She leaned her aching head back, and closed her eyes, and tried to forget; repeated mentally first some of the Psalms, then a hymn of Keble's, then the last chapter of the Revelations, then the fourteenth of St. John; and by their help kept down the gnawing irritability of brain and body, which was threatening to destroy her self-control. Happily for her and everybody else, Hugh, satisfied for the present, had gone to sleep with Floss in his arms; and all sat still and silent till the refreshment station was reached.

It was now twelve o'clock, and the sun was struggling to break out, giving cheering hopes of a fine afternoon. At the desire of Mrs. P. the whole party alighted, except Hugh, who would not stir. His mamma turned to Lady Adelaide as she passed, and in her most affable manner hoped, as they robbed her of her luncheon, she would allow them to offer her something? She declined civilly, though with rather more distance than Mrs. P. thought at all appropriate in 'a person of that sort;' however, it prevented the offer from being renewed, and she and Hugh were left together. He was refreshed by his nap, and disposed to be communicative; told her he was to be a very rich man some day, for his papa had lately made a great deal of money, and they had all become grand people, and had just got a carriage and horses of their own; and they were going to London; and there had been such a packing of boxes, and fuss about the girls' things, and the parties they were to give, and the people they were to try and get introduced to, that papa had several times said he wished he had not had the money at all. In the midst of these domestic revelations, Lady Adelaide was unpleasantly startled by the appearance of a head at her open window, and an unshaven face lighted up with malicious exultation.

'So *there* you are, after all, my lady! Well, if I didn't peep into all the carriages, one after another, in hopes of finding you, and having the honour to escort you to town; however, better late than never. I'll e'en secure one of these places at once.'

'They are all taken, sir,' said Lady Adelaide.

‘What a nuisance! However, somebody will get out soon, and I’ll make the guard let me know. So you thought to slip away without my knowing, did you, my lady? Not a bad idea that, but it won’t quite do. I had such a race after you; tore on my clothes, got into my gig, pelted to Shareham half drowned, knocked the folks up at the George, and got a chaise and four, and promised the boys double money if they were in time. They drove like the wind. I am afraid *yours* were rather troublesome, were they not?’

She deigned no answer. Hugh watched them both with eager eyes.

‘Sorry to find you are sent for express; but it will be all right by the time you arrive, I dare say; and if it brings ’em round, you know—there, I don’t mean anything—you needn’t colour up like that, my lady. I am sure I only want to be civil, and mean to be. I shall make a point of calling as soon as possible, and paying my respects. Your cousin, Miss Conway, is a charming lady; not a bit of nonsensical pride about *her*.’ He rubbed his hands as he spoke, took his hat off, and smoothed it with his sleeve; replaced it with a jerk, and leaned his elbows on the door, that he might peer in more at his ease. She sat without looking at him, mechanically unclasping her leather bag, and examining Miss Lyndon’s much-prized fittings and conveniences.

‘It is very courageous of you to travel in this way by yourself, Lady Adelaide, really. Are you not afraid?’

‘Of what, sir?’ she asked, calmly raising her eyes.

‘Why, of all sorts of things—accidents, and all kinds of annoyances.’

‘I am used to annoyances, sir; and whatever I may be exposed to on my journey, I know I shall be safe from at the end of it, so they are of very little consequence.’

‘Indeed?’ said he, biting his lip; ‘you know it, do you? You have not forgotten what was agreed last night?’

She was silent. Her hand was now on something at the bottom of her bag, and her fingers clenched it tightly.

‘Have you prepared an answer yet?’

She could resist the impulse no longer.

‘Not quite—perhaps *this* may do in the meanwhile.’ And she handed him Mr. Ousel’s letter.

Probably, had it been in her power, she would have recalled the action the next moment; it was contrary to all her fixed resolutions—but it was now too late. He tore open the blank envelope, and found two or three folded papers, endorsed, ‘Copies. The originals forthcoming when required.’ One glance told him what they were, and then it turned to meet hers, in a mixture of terror and rage

that made his face quite livid. Before he had time to ask a question, Floss, privately goaded by her young master, made a sudden dash at the window, snapping at him so viciously, that he involuntarily started back, dropping his papers on the platform—and in the scramble to recover them, dropping his hat. Hugh laughed aloud, not very politely, and leaned out to watch him. ‘Oh, how cross he looks! there is his hat rolling off the platform! What fun! Now he has got it—he is shaking his fist at me. I don’t care. I am very glad he is gone, aint you?’

She was too harassed and heart-sick to be glad, even of a release; but she could not say she was sorry, or think it necessary to comment on this somewhat questionable behaviour. Very thankful was she when Mrs. P. sent her son out a tumbler of water, which Hugh, of his own accord, offered to her first—even before Floss; and which the three shared amicably among them. Mr. P. soon came back, and one by one, the rest followed; the lady last of all, and in great danger of being left behind; so that she had to be hurried in, and the door locked upon her, in rather an ignominious manner. The consequence was that she took the seat next to Hugh, opposite her gentle partner; and some argument, begun in the station, about the annoyances of this particular train—which it had appeared she had insisted upon choosing in defiance of advice, and which she declared was entirely to satisfy others, as she never cared what became of herself—was resumed with remarkable pungency and spirit; the only improvement, indeed, that could have been suggested, would have been that it should be deferred to another time.

The scene that had just passed, and the hasty step she had taken, had grievously added to the depression of Lady Adelaide’s spirits. She was shocked to find how intense her hatred and disgust of her tormentor had become, and how much anger and scorn had ruffled her hardly-won resignation; making it very difficult to compose and raise her thoughts, though she felt more worn and unhappy than ever. And now all this jangling, though she could hardly bear what was said, seemed just too much to bear. Would anything stop it?

She happened to look up, and caught a momentary glimpse of persons running along the embankment, waving their caps, and making frantic signs. An instinctive prescience of danger made her dart upon little Hugh, seize, and throw him on the floor of the carriage. In the very act came a shock, a crash, a blow, a tumult of shrieks—and for a brief interval she knew nothing more.

Consciousness quickly returned, with a sense of pain and oppression. She had been thrown partly on her side, with her arm bent under her, and had been struck on the back of the head by a box or Mrs. P.’s, that had filled up half her husband’s allotted place.



How much everybody was injured could only be surmised by their incessant screams, which rang, more or less, from one end of the train to the other, but in this carriage more vehemently than any. Her first thought was of the child, and she found strength to ask if he was hurt. A half-stifled voice under the seat relieved her; he was only astonished and upside down, but nothing worse. She made an attempt to rise, but found it impossible in her constrained position, with half the recumbent weight of Mrs. P.'s person weighing her down—whom no persuasion could induce to make the slightest effort, beyond piercing screams for the help nobody could give. After one or two ineffectual struggles, Adelaide was just sinking from faintness and exhaustion, when the door was opened, and a well-known voice rang above all the confusion of sounds—calling her by name, and entreating to know if she were safe.

She looked up, and tried to answer; the next instant dexterous and tender arms were round her—and how, she never knew, she was extricated from her painful position, and carried into the air by Maurice Randolph. There was no shelter to which he could take her, and no seat but the wet ground; but she half stood, half leaned, supported on his arm and shoulder, trembling and overcome, yet feeling she had a friend and protector, and in that feeling drawing comfort, before she was capable of doing more.

'Thank God you are safe!' murmured Randolph, to whom the whole scene of terror and confusion was lost in that pale face and drooping form he had pined so often to see.

'Thank God!' she repeated faintly, 'for this—for all mercies; for your being here, which is one of them.'

'To me it is, indeed,' returned he, in a low, fervent tone, for this was happiness he had hardly dared to hope for; 'will you, can you trust yourself to me to take care of you—as an old servant of your house?'

'Oh,' she said, 'I owe you so much, I have blessed your name so often, why should I not trust you? I do—as a brother—the brother you would have died with, and lived to save. But do not stay with me; I am not hurt, and many others are.'

He would not leave her, however, till he had contrived her a seat, and wrapped her in his railway rug, which fortunately he had carried out with him, from force of habit—and which at least protected her from the damp. She could not help noticing, as he moved away, that he was rather lame, and a good deal reduced by his illness; but the gladness of his heart seemed to give him new life, and in the work of humanity that called forth his services, he was soon displaying all his wonted energy, if not all his former strength.

The whole scene was by this time one of the wildest confusion,

part all power of describing; raging men, shrieking or fainting women, and crying children; some shouting for help, some storming against the carelessness of the engine-driver, the neglect of the company, and every other real or imaginary cause of the accident; some scrambling after their private chattels, others extricating the inmates of the injured carriages, two of which had been flung down the bank, but happily without loss of life. Time alone would show how serious the injuries would prove to be; there were many of all kinds, but nothing that appeared hopeless or alarming. The accident had been caused by one of those pieces of carelessness which nobody can account for; they had run into an empty luggage train, which certainly had no business there; but there it was, and it was no comfort to know it ought to have been anywhere else. Randolph and such gentlemen as preserved their presence of mind, made strenuous exertions to relieve and calm their terrified fellow-passengers; and the sun breaking at last through the clouds, cheered them all by his warmth and brightness. Assistance came after a time; some of the worst cases were conveyed to neighbouring farm-houses, and intelligence reaching the nearest station, an engine was despatched to the spot to bring back the others. Of course, the wounded and most helpless, or most frightened, were attended to first; and Maurice presently perceived that Lady Adelaide, instead of resting quietly as he had begged her to do, was as busy as himself. He tried to remonstrate, but her piteous look silenced him. She felt she must do something, or her endurance would give way. She was thankful for her escape, thankful she had been able to save that child, thankful to know Randolph was near; but for all this, selfish as it seemed when so many were in trouble and pain around her, her soul was sick with impatient longing to go on, even if on foot: and active usefulness was her only remedy against murmurs that would approach rebellion.

It was past two o'clock when she found herself back again at the refreshment station they had reached at noon. Twelve hours she had been already in this agony of laborious suspense; how long could she bear it? How *should* she bear it if—no, that would not do to think about. She *would* not give way. When would the line be clear again, and another train ready? They could not say; it must be some hours. She wrung her hands as she turned away; and found Randolph coming in search of her.

'You will be knocked up, Lady Adelaide; do let me get you some refreshment, and try and rest.'

'Oh no, I cannot rest, I only want to go on. Oh, Mr. Randolph,' she said suddenly, with a gesture almost of supplication, 'if you ever did a kindness—you who have offered me so many, and been so ill repaid—have pity on me now, and help me to go on, or I

may be too late. You love my boy and he loves you ; for his sake, bear with my impatient selfishness, and help me, for I do not know what to do !

‘Come this way,’ said he, gently, and drawing her arm in his, led her through the crowd that filled the station, to the outer yard. A chaise was being put to as fast as hands could buckle harness, and her portmanteau and shawl were waiting to be put in, as well as his own travelling gear.

‘I secured this just in time,’ he said. ‘It had brought a party from a distance, and was waiting for a return fare. There were a dozen applicants for it within five minutes. It had occurred to me you would be glad to go on, so I thought I might take the liberty. Who is this coming limping after us, looking such an object ? I declare it is Spindler !’

And Mr. Spindler it was, very lame, his face tied up with his handkerchief, and his hat crushed out of all shape—not to say respectability.

‘Lady Adelaide ! Lady Adelaide ! I must speak to you—only one minute !’ And as he sank down on her portmanteau, overcome with pain and exhaustion, she could not, in ordinary humanity, refuse to wait. Was he hurt ? Could they be of any service ? Hurt ? yes, he should think so, and so the insurance would find ; luckily he *was* insured, and he would have it out of them, they might be sure of that. He had lost two teeth, and his head was cut, and his ankle was twisted, and he ached in every bone—it would be the death of him, he knew. But he must say something to her, if he died for it, and he clutched her dress so tightly, she could not have escaped if she would. Her compassion made her forget herself ; she looked at Randolph, and he understood the look, and without asking leave, forthwith carried Mr. Spindler into the station, procured water and linen with some difficulty, and then supported him, while Lady Adelaide, with the practised hand she had perforce acquired in her Indian campaign, bathed and bound up his wound. He groaned bitterly several times when she was so employed, but muttered directly afterwards, ‘Never mind ; I’m insured,’ as a species of consolation that made up for everything. When all was done that humanity could suggest, and he seemed a little refreshed, she quietly bade him good-bye, and was following Randolph, who had hastened to see after the carriage, but he started up wildly.

‘I must speak to you—one word ! That—that packet—those letters—not a line is true, not a syllable—but it may do me a deal of mischief if it gets about. I’ll tell you all about it—but you *must* silence him. What will content you ? Anything in reason !’

She shook her head, and moved to go, but he clung to her skirts.

‘You don’t understand—ladies never do—and you fancy all sorts of things ; I tell you it was nothing in itself, but it could be made a handle of to annoy me. He must have got hold of it in his grandfather’s papers, I suppose. I *must* be sure of your silence and his, one way or another. He’ll do whatever you bid him, and if you promise, I can trust to your word. Look here—will *this* be enough to make us friends?’

He held out a document she knew too well. She blushed deeply as she looked at it, and involuntarily glanced at the doorway where Randolph was waiting.

‘You offer so high a price for my secrecy, Mr. Spindler, it is difficult to believe the affair can be as unimportant as you say ; but you should ascertain first whether that secrecy be worth your buying. I gave you the letter under a momentary impulse of irritation, but I am perfectly ignorant of the contents, and have no wish to know them.’

He stared at her in blank astonishment. She quietly drew her dress from his relaxing hold, wished him a speedy recovery, and left him. Another interruption awaited her, however ; for, in making her way to the chaise, she suddenly found herself detained by her late fellow-traveller, Mr. P., in such a state of breathless excitement, that his words came out in short, broken gasps.

‘Oh, ma’am!—oh, your ladyship!—we have been looking for you everywhere!—My wife and daughters hope they may be allowed—indeed, I do not know how to express—our thankfulness to you no tongue can—such presence of mind, such kind consideration!—If I only had breath to say what I ought—’

She civilly assured him he had very little to thank her for ; she was only glad she had been able, in any way, to prevent his little boy from being hurt ; and with that, would have moved on ; but he held her fast, looking anxiously about among the crowd for the rest of his party.

‘My wife, ma’am, I know, wants to make you her apologies ; if she had only known to whom she had had the honour of speaking—dear, dear, I can’t express myself at all as she would—where *can* she be ? She was sadly knocked about, and frightened, and so were the girls, but they were here just now : and yet, I can’t see them anywhere, for the crowd. They will never give me a moment’s peace, if—Oh, ma’am, could you not wait a minute, to see the dear boy you saved?’

‘Impossible, sir!’ she said, breaking from him ; but stopping the next moment, to add in a tone of gentle apology, ‘pray excuse this haste ; when I tell you I am going to my own little boy’s sick-bed, you will not wish to hinder me any more, I am sure.’

The appeal was, indeed, irresistible ; he could only stammer

some very sincere, though scarcely audible expressions of regret and sympathy, as she hurried past to the chaise. Randolph handed her in, and took his seat by her side. It was some little time before he ventured to look round—for he knew she was weeping.

Those tears, though she checked them as soon as she could, probably saved her from worse suffering; they were the first she had shed since the news had come, and were a great relief. But as they proceeded on their way, her exhaustion began to alarm her companion. She could not deny that her head ached severely, and that she had a pain in her side: but if he mentioned stopping to rest, her gesture of entreaty was so piteous, he could do nothing but promise liberal gratuities to the drivers to redouble their speed. Some slight refreshment that she accepted when they reached the town where they were again to join the railway, revived her a little; and they were compelled to rest, whether they liked it or not, for the train was much later than they had been led to expect. Very little was said by either during any part of the journey; her suffering was too sacred for Randolph to intrude on; all he could attempt was to serve her respectfully and tenderly, without letting her see it more than he could help; forestalling her wishes, relieving her from every exertion or difficulty—and only watching her when he could do it unobserved. He even refrained from commenting on her increased pallor and fatigue; and in outward appearance remained calm and cheerful, while his whole soul was racked with anxious sympathy.

He had only reached England the day before, and had hurried on to Lilford without stopping, intended to proceed by the Shareham coach in the morning—when the sight of her in the coffee-room changed all his plans, and he had just time to redeem her watch, and secure his own ticket by the same train; in order, as he pleaded with himself, that she might at least have some one within reach if wanted—but in reality, because he could not do otherwise than follow, let her go where she might. Through the long weary hours of confinement and recovery, the yearning after her had been the severest trial of all; and now as he witnessed her patient anguish, and his own impotence to give her relief, it seemed as if all he had ever felt before had been an illusion; as if he had never really loved her till that moment, when he loved too unselfishly, to think of himself or of what she thought of him—only how he could lighten her burden, and give her worn spirit rest.

They reached the terminus at last, and looked eagerly round for some friend or servant who might be waiting to convey Lady Adelaide, and bring her the latest news. No one was there. Randolph understood her mute sign, hailed the first cab, followed her into it, and told the driver to go as hard he could to —— Street.

Not a word was said ; she sat with her head bowed down, her hands tightly locked on her knee ; and as Maurice's own stout heart grew sick with foreboding, he durst not imagine what was going on in hers.

The streets were full, the bright sunshine had sent out everybody who had been so long shut up by rain ; the parks were thronging with carriages and riders ; and the glittering London world, in which she had once played so graceful a part, shot its gleams once more on Adelaide Lyndon, but unheeded as if they had fallen on her tomb. In one long, silent, motionless agony of prayer, she passed that last, most trying interval ; and saw nothing, heard nothing, but her hope and her dread, as they strove together within her. It was between six and seven when they entered——Street, and drove up to the once familiar door. Both gave one glance at the windows, and then at each other—a glance that neither ever forgot. *The house was shut up.*

## CHAPTER XXXI.

*Beatrice.* O, schönes Engelsantlitz meiner Mutter !

So bin ich wieder in dem Schoss der Meinen ?

*Isabella.* Und nichts soll uns mehr scheiden, als der Tod.—*Schiller.*

NEVER, in all Maurice Randolph's chequered life, had he experienced such a moment as that. The courage that had carried him so gallantly through fire and flood, was so completely crushed by this stroke, that he staggered as he stepped upon the pavement ; and when he mechanically assisted his unhappy companion to alight, could not see a feature in her face. But the porter did, who opened the door ; and at the sight of its ghastly, pallid agony, the official speech of subdued explanation died on his lips. She asked no question—put him by with a wave of her hand, and passed swiftly on through the darkened hall—which she had last crossed in the early morning, in misgiving, and fear, and trembling hope, on her ill-fated wedding-day, ten years ago. There was a murmur of voices round her, though whence they came she stayed not to see ; a question, 'When did it happen ?' and an answer, 'At half-past one this afternoon,' and then a cry burst from her that rang through the hushed house—and blindly, but by instinct, she rushed up the staircase, too fast for any one to stay her, never pausing to breathe till she was on the bedroom flight, at her mothers door. At the moment she reached it, that door was opened by Lady Delaunay herself, who, like every one else, had been startled by that unearthly shriek. She gave an involuntary start at the sight of the deathlike face, then sprang forwards with a guarded but fervent ejaculation of tenderness, and clasped her in her arms.

‘My child, my daughter, my Adelaide!—I feared this—but it is not what you think; mercy—mercy has been shown to you and me, and our boy is better—he has been for some hours; there is no longer any cause for alarm whatever. Yes, you shall see him this instant; come this way. You will be cautious—you will command yourself for his sake, I know.’

And judging rightly that it was the most merciful thing to do, she led her at once through the dressing-room and bedroom Adelaide knew so well, to one she had once known better still; for it had been her own in early childhood, and for that reason had been allotted to her boy. She heard, as through a mist, her mother’s voice saying softly, ‘Your nurse has come at last, Walter, but very tired; so we must not let her do too much;’ and by feeling, more than by sight, she found she had reached a bedside, and was within the curtain, and was kneeling with her face in the pillow, and two hot shaking hands were drawing her neck nearer and nearer, with a low husky whisper, ‘You dear, darling mamma, I am so glad—now we shall be all right!’ What happened next she knew not, nor how long she there remained; she felt as if she could not rise, she could not even utter a thanksgiving; the mercy was as overwhelming as the judgment, and nature was too worn out to do more. There came an interval of dim confusion, in which she was just aware of a sensation like sinking through the floor, and then she found herself on a sofa in the dressing-room, her head resting on her mother’s bosom, and her brother chafing her hands. She heard tender, pitying words as she opened her eyes; and then came soft kisses, like a gentle rain on a parched and thirsty land. She feared to move—to break the charm; it was what she had dreamed so often, and dreaded to awaken from again; but she raised her eyes to her mother’s face, bent over her in anxious solicitude, and then looked down on the eager countenance of her brother kneeling by her side, and tried to speak—and the instant she did so, the emotion suppressed by intensity of suffering through the day, broke down every barrier of self-control, while the more she tried to hide or stop the tears that gushed through her fingers, the faster they poured forth. But this time there were others to mingle with them; Lady Delaunay folded her yet closer to her heart, and her own voice was broken with weeping, as she pressed her lips on the dark hair and slender hands that hid Adelaide’s face.

‘Look up, look up!’ she said, earnestly, ‘my own daughter. mine once more for ever! It is all forgiven—all forgotten: nothing remains of the sorrowful past but the fruits of adversity, and the lessons God teaches us by our own errors and wrong. I have tried you sorely—I fear, cruelly—and you have borne it all

with patience : but you do not know, you cannot, how I longed, when we last parted, to do as I do now—take you to my arms and heart, and tell you we will part no more. I was hard in my manner, but I yearned over you, Adelaide, as I have done many a time through all these years of estrangement, which are ended at last,—God be thanked—for ever ! Death may divide us in the body, but never again in heart !’

Adelaide twined her arms round her, and buried her face, still bathed in tears, in her bosom.

‘Let me hear you bless me,’ she murmured, ‘and I shall believe this is real.’

She felt her mother’s hands laid on her head, and heard the solemn words of benediction she had thought never to hear again, and knew she was forgiven indeed. Further exertion was impossible ; her brother sat by her side, whispering kind words and remorseful regrets for past negligence, which she had no voice to answer ; but she rested against his shoulder, as in the days of their childish play, and passively surrendered herself to the tender cares which her mother was lavishing upon her, as if jealous of her newly-found treasure. Tea was brought in, and Lady Delaunay’s own hands served her, silencing her faint remonstrance with the playfully imperative reminder, that now she was come home, she must be a good child and do as she was bid. Every word, every look, everything that was done or implied, confirmed the glad conviction of her being really at home, not only welcomed, but beloved : and notwithstanding bodily pain, weariness, and indisposition, a deep sense of happiness, the deeper for her recent agony, gradually sank into her heart, and diffused itself over her face, veiling with a beauty of its own the pallor of exhaustion and the furrows of tears.

It was not, however, till her mother had gone back to her invalid to take him some tea, and reassure him on the subject of his mamma, that she gathered strength to express what she felt. ‘Oh Bertram, Bertram !’ she said, ‘how I have prayed for this moment, and despaired of it again and again ! Is it possible, that loving me still as you do, you have never till now believed in my love for *you*, nor how I pined to see you once more ?’

‘Hush, hush !’ he said hastily, ‘if you do not want to cut me to the heart do not say such things : they make me detest myself. I do not know how it was—I always wished to see you back here, and to know it was all made up ; but whenever I wanted to do anything for you, Charlotte persuaded me I should only make matters worse. It was her belief, I know, that my mother would be more ready to forgive if left to take her own time : and so it went on—I see I was wrong—I ought to have taken it up, and



insisted on something being done ; and from my soul, Adelaide, I ask you to forgive *me*. I thought of it, I can tell you, when I believed my last hour was come, and it was too late to make amends ; and afterwards, when I was confined to my bed, I determined to come and see you the first thing ; but then I found my mother and you had met, and she had taken it all into her own hands, so I had better not interfere. I am afraid, though, if the truth must be told, I have been the cause of your patience being longer tried than it might otherwise have been, by keeping her as I did ; you will forgive me for that when you have time to appreciate the cause. I know you will love Frances Cameron, and what is more, her father knows more of you than you are aware. He has told us things that we never dreamed of ; and I can tell *you*, I have been made proud of my poor neglected sister—and I am much deceived if my mother is not prouder still. You should have seen your Walter's face when Sir Duncan was praising your heroism. Poor little man ! I am afraid you must have had a terrible shock when you arrived. You had not heard of our being summoned, I suppose—so it would not have occurred to you that poor Mrs. Marsden was gone.'

She had forgotten the darkened house, and was shocked at her own indifference.

'Is she, indeed ? I loved her dearly once, but like others, she became so totally estranged, that death can hardly divide us more. And yet it seems ungrateful and selfish only to remember it was *not* the one I thought.'

'Very natural that you should. We had no idea she was so ill, till Mr. Powys wrote that he thought her state very serious, and that she had owned it would be a great comfort to see us again, though she did not like to send for us. Of course, this was enough to make us start immediately, and we found her sinking fast when we came ; conscious just at intervals, and speaking a sentence or two at a time, when she recognized a face—but nothing more. Walter, I am afraid, took cold on the journey ; it was very wet weather, and it brought on a swelled throat. My mother did not get alarmed about it till yesterday, when he could hardly breathe, and she thought at times he really would be suffocated, for nothing seemed to relieve the swelling. If it had not been for the poor old lady's state, I should have come off to fetch you at once ; but she was not easy, I found, except when one of us was by, and as my mother could not leave Walter, I was obliged to be constantly at hand. She often tried to tell me something, but I could make out very little, except that it was about 'poor Ada.' She may have felt, as I had done myself, that she had not been as kind to you as she ought, and it was now too late. At any rate, you were evi-

dently in her thoughts, for the last time she saw my mother, an hour before her death, she contrived to say something distinctly about forgiving you.'

'What time did she die?' asked Adelaide, much moved by this unexpected trait.

'At half-past one this afternoon. By that time Walter had been easier some hours, so that my mother could venture to leave him. He was so bad in the night that she decided it would be necessary to telegraph to you, so that you might secure the earliest train. I shall not easily forget her look when she told me, she should never forgive herself, if—but there, it was ordered otherwise. Our own medical man was in the house all night, and between two and three his remedies proved more successful; the boy was relieved, and has been going on well ever since. All he will want now will be careful nursing; perhaps sea-bathing by-and-by. We will all go together somewhere, as soon as the hot weather comes, and recruit you both. For I can tell you plainly, Adelaide, you do not leave us again. My mother and I settled that as soon as we had time to settle anything. It was our only comfort, this trying day, when we did not know what could have happened to delay your arrival. I went twice to the station myself, and again this last time, when I was just too late—as I was at Southampton, when you came from India. Did you never hear that I went to meet you, and found you had gone on to Cannymoor?'

'Never. Oh, Bertram! if you had only been in time, how much sorrow it would have prevented!'

'Yes, it will not do to think of now, I am afraid. I know Charlotte thought at the time, it would not have done either of us much good, as she said you considered yourself too unjustly treated to be willing to make the necessary submission; which I must own, I never so completely believed as when that unlucky message of mine received no answer. Henry Lyndon explained to me how it was; and my first object after making friends with Mr. Randolph when I see him again, will be to quarrel with him for his carelessness. My dear girl, what is the matter?'

'How could I be so ungrateful as to forget him all this time? Is he still here?'

'Who? Mr. Randolph? No; he was just gone when I came; his card was on the table. Did you meet him?'

'Yes, at Lilford, and I do not know what I should have done without his kindness and consideration. What will he think of my want of gratitude?' And hurriedly, but earnestly, she described her journey, and all Randolph had done, reproaching herself for having allowed him to depart without a word of acknowledgment. The Earl, however, satisfied her, at last, by promising to find him next day,

'We have a pretty long score to clear off among us,' he said, with a smile, 'and what is more,' he added, with a shake of the head, 'we have some misrepresentations to trace out and atone for. However, it will go hard with us if we do not find some way of making our peace, let him be as sensitive as he may. Now I will just have one peep at my nephew, and then leave you to rest, before I am summarily turned out.'

They went into Walter's room together, and found Lady Delaunay sitting by his side. His eyes brightened as they approached, and turned from one face to another with an eager but unspoken question, which his uncle took upon himself to answer, as he bent over his pillow. 'One home belongs to us all from this time, Walter. Ask grandmamma, and she will tell you the same.'

But there was no need to ask; his mother's face was quite enough; for though he had never seen her look so tired, he could never remember seeing her smile like that.

It was hardly to be expected that such a journey, with its combined drawbacks of mental suffering, unfavourable weather, and accident, would not tell on the strength of Lady Adelaide; its effects, indeed, were making themselves felt already. It was easy to own she was weary—to accept gladly the proposal of sharing her mother's room, so as to be near Walter in the night—to lie down, attended by her care and blessing as if she were a child once more;—but it was not so easy to sleep, with a throbbing head, and aching limbs, and a brain, through which every sound of the last four-and-twenty hours' turmoil was ringing without cessation. If she closed her eyes for a moment in forgetfulness, she heard the wind, and the rain, and the plunging of the horses through the mire; and woke panting with the exertion of struggling to go on, up endless hills, and through countless obstacles; or the screams of the people in the train, and the whizz of engine after engine coming to crush them as they lay, made her start up—once so wildly, that it roused Lady Delaunay, who, after sitting up half the night with Walter, had just fallen asleep. The nervous suffering, so unconsciously revealed, went to her very heart; but her tender words and caresses by degrees took effect, and Adelaide at last slept quietly, with her mother's hand locked in hers. Still, morning found her so unwell, a decree was passed, consigning her to medical and nursely treatment, and confinement for the present to those three rooms; all cares and agitation prohibited, and nothing allowed her to do but to rest, and amuse Walter.

How gladly she submitted to her sentence—feeling just ill enough to be fit for no exertion, and yet not so ill as to be indifferent to the luxury of rest—her heart tranquillized, her spirits cheered by the sight of loved faces, and the restoration to her home—may be imagined without description. It was a Paradise of

repose after all she had gone through, to watch her boy's daily amendment, and take a part in it by the pleasure her presence gave him ; to recline in her arm-chair by his side while he slept, with her Bible before her, thinking over all her deliverances, and refreshing her soul with quiet prayer ; and to have her mother's fostering presence ever felt, even when unseen, through countless instances of considerate affection ; proving how constantly she was in her thoughts, and yet how careful she was not to wound her feelings. With a grateful humility, that touched Lady Delaunay more than the most eloquent words, she accepted every fresh kindness as it was offered ; as if all were so undeserved, she had no right to select, or to remonstrate against any. She seemed, indeed, as she had once said, to have resigned herself into her mother's hands, to do with her what she would ; and her quiet trust in her protection and tenderness, calmed every doubt, and removed every fear.

Care had, however, been too long her companion to be shaken off in a moment ; one burden, forgotten at first, resumed its pressure with the first bulletin she despatched to Cannymoor, and could not again be laid aside. There seemed a fatality about her letters, for the one she had written to her mother, and which she remembered seeing Penelope put into her bag, she could not find anywhere ; and was forced to conclude that it had been lost in the confusion of the railway accident. To write it over again was a task beyond her powers, and for an opportunity of bringing the subject forward, she waited in vain. Her mother was either too busy, or too tired, for her to venture on adding to her cares ; especially as she owned to being oppressed with business just now, and looked at times nearly worn out. Once, indeed, she made a desperate effort, and was beginning to enter on the subject of her difficulties ; but Lady Delaunay kindly, but decidedly, stopped her short.

'I fully appreciate your frank confidence,' she said, 'and you shall see I know how to return it. Trust begets trust, as I told you before ; but spare me and yourself any discussions just now ; you are not fit for the exertion yet, and I have not time to attend to you properly. We shall have more leisure next week ; and meanwhile, all you have to do is to keep your mind tranquil, and rely on me.'

After this, what could she do but wait patiently, and hope that the delay would be of no consequence ; though every hour so deepened the repugnance she felt, in naming the subject at all, that she sometimes doubted her courage holding out. This doubt was in no way diminished by a private and confidential missive she received from Miss Conway.

It had been rather a relief to Lady Adelaide to hear that her

cousin was too much overcome by her loss, and the fatigue of nursing, to be equal to paying her a visit before the funeral. She felt so strongly the impossibility of their intimacy being ever renewed, that she shrank from their first meeting with a nervous emotion, which she believed Charlotte must in some degree share. This mysterious communication was therefore as unwelcome as unexpected, and the contents more than confirmed her misgivings.

‘Unequal as I am, dear Adelaide, to much exertion in the heavy depression of my spirits, I must write you a hasty line to put you on your guard. Whatever may have been insinuated by evil-minded persons, I have your interests too much at heart, not to dread anything occurring to mar the happy union with your dearest mother, on which I congratulate you sincerely, and hope to witness in person. It is right you should be aware that *a certain gentleman* called here yesterday, and as he begged for an interview on urgent business, I was obliged to see him for a few minutes. I was much dismayed by what he told me, having no idea how seriously you were involved. He was in a very resentful mood, and I had great difficulty in pacifying him for the present. My dread is, lest it should come to your dear mother’s knowledge, as I know nothing that would pain or shock her more. She has shown such confidence in the disinterestedness of your submission, and of your assurance that you have no debts whatever—(I did suggest, while she was at Cannymoor, that you might have some little difficulties, hoping she would do something for you on the spot) that I cannot imagine what would be the result of such an unexpected demand on her liberality, just at the moment when she is so worried by other things. In strictest confidence, I am afraid Delaunay has allowed his affairs to fall into such confusion, that before any settlements can be made, your mother will have a great deal of trouble, if not of actual loss. But we can consult what is to be done, when I am with you; and by that time I may be able to help you with something more satisfactory than sympathy or advice. Not that I pretend to advise, for a moment. You are, after all, the best judge. Destroy this, as soon as read, and depend as ever, on my sincere affection.’

It was the well-known subtle reasoning that had been so fatally persuasive in her youth. Adelaide destroyed the letter as she was desired, but to forget it was impossible.

Lord Delaunay had seen but little of his sister since that first evening. Besides his own affairs, he had a great deal to attend to in those of his deceased relative; and as it had been her wish to be buried in the family vault, near General Conway, went himself into the country to make the necessary arrangements. On the day

of the funeral, Lady Delaunay went to Bryanstone Square to assist her niece, and bring her home. The body had been removed early in the morning, and the Earl was to join them on his return, after the will had been read.

‘If you are equal to it, my dear,’ Lady Delaunay said to her daughter, as she left her, ‘and can come down into the drawing-room against our arrival, I shall be glad to have a little serious conversation with you both ; as there are one or two questions I wish to ask you in the presence of each other. If we ever hope to live together in confidence and comfort, we must begin by thoroughly clearing up all misunderstandings. I rely on *your* openness, and should be sorry not to do the same on *hers*, so that where you appear to differ in your statements, it must be owing to something that cannot be too soon explained.’

Mrs. Marsden’s quiet and harmless life had not been so unfruitful as many might have supposed. In her old-fashioned way, she had done much unobtrusive good, and many poor old pensioners required a great deal of consoling for the loss of one, who had never kept her hand shut against trouble that she knew, though she might not have been particularly diligent in seeking it out. Traits of kindness that nobody had suspected, were continually being brought to light ; justifying the excessive grief of her old servants, who had done as they pleased so long, it was difficult for them not to feel grievously wronged in the prospect of losing so comfortable a home. Nobody was more ready to sympathize with these, not entirely disinterested mourners, than Miss Conway ; her condolence being the more sincere, that she knew better than most, what excellent reason they had for their very worst anticipations.

With a melancholy sigh Lady Delaunay looked round the once familiar room, where the kinswoman she had known so many years had welcomed her so often ; at her age, the breaking of a single tie was not a matter to be easily repaired ; and the qualities of her poor old friend, widely as they differed from her own, appearing to her now in their gentlest and most endearing light, she perhaps began to feel, as if in the pride of intellectual superiority, she might have too lightly esteemed her judgment and goodness.

‘Yes,’ she said, half unconsciously, as if following some train of thought, ‘there was more real wisdom in her simplicity than in many a more brilliant understanding. I shall never forget what she said to me that morning of my journey, nor how she said it ; though I little knew at the time, how deep was the truth her words contained.’

Miss Conway, rather embarrassed how to answer, made some suitable observation on Mrs. Marsden’s kindness and justice of heart.

'You are right, Charlotte; she possessed both those qualities. Her last words to me were to beg me to pardon Ada; and that she hoped she had done justice—she had tried to do it. If she failed, it may have been because justice is the most difficult thing that can be given to mortal wisdom to do. Deceived in ourselves as often as in others, who is sufficient for these things?'

Miss Conway made no reply. A scene, which she would fain have forgotten, rose upon her memory while her aunt was speaking; her old friend gasping for breath, and holding her hand in both hers, while her dim eyes fixed a beseeching gaze on her face, and her trembling lips again and again repeated, 'I only want to do justice; tell me if there is anything you will wish you had told me, before it is too late.' And she had pressed those cold lips with hers, and in the very face of death had asserted she had nothing to tell. Certainly, the time had not yet come for her to wish she *had* told her that which might have altered her arrangements for the future; but the words and the look were very trying to recall, and would return, in spite of all her reasonings with her conscience. In silent thoughtfulness as profound as her own, she accompanied her aunt into the carriage, and the drive passed without a word being spoken on either side. As they entered the hall, Anderson, who seemed to have been on the watch, came forward with more eagerness than he usually considered to be compatible with dignity.

'Her ladyship is in the dining-room, my lady.'

'In the dining-room? Is any one with her?' asked Lady Delaunay, in some surprise.

'A gentleman called to see her ladyship on business, my lady, and she ordered him to be shown in there.'

'Is it Mr. Henry Lyndon, do you know?'

'No, my lady—Mr. Spindler.'

The proud blood flushed in Lady Delaunay's face; she stepped hastily towards the dining-room door. Miss Conway tried to detain her.

'Let me speak to you for a moment, dearest aunt! let me try and explain. Indeed there are great allowances to be made for her, and if a mistaken delicacy has induced her to keep back the truth——'

'No more, Charlotte—let go my arm. You mean well, but no one shall interfere between me and my daughter again—not even you.'

And as she spoke, she opened the door. Mr. Spindler, whose back was towards it, turned with a start, and a low, apologetic bow. Lady Adelaide turned too, and at the sight of her mother's face, almost lost her courage. Stung to the quick by the insulting threats of her persecutor, who had made one last desperate effort to

terrify her into something like submission and acquiescence, she had felt a moment before, that to be released from him she could do anything; but the grave displeasure that she saw veiled in the politeness with which Lady Delaunay returned his greeting, pained her so deeply, she could only stand motionless, longing, yet dreading to hear what she would say first.

The voice, however, in which the Countess spoke, betrayed no resentment; it was calmly courteous, assuring her visitor, who still stood bowing and stammering a sort of apology, that none was required—urgent business precluded the necessity, and she was quite aware nothing less would have induced him to favour them with a visit at such a time.

He cleared his throat, struggling to preserve what he considered his proper position.

‘It is urgent business, Lady Delaunay, as you rightly suppose; and when I explain the whole to you, as I propose doing, you will be able to judge whether or not I have been handsomely treated. But may be, my Lady Adelaide prefers explaining it herself, in which case I shall be happy to wait.’

‘Mr. Spindler,’ interrupted Miss Conway, in a tone of persuasive softness, ‘might not these explanations be deferred to another day? My cousin is not well, and I am sure, from the friendly regard you have expressed for her, you would be sorry to cause her unnecessary agitation and inconvenience.’

‘I should, indeed, Miss Conway; you do me but justice, madam; but business is business, and as the liberal terms I offered have been insultingly rejected, I can only say, that if ladies of quality choose to owe money, they must pay like commoners, or take the consequences.’

‘I quite agree with you, sir,’ said Lady Delaunay, drily; ‘and since that is your errand, we will spare you the trouble of explanation. Adelaide, my love——’

The gentle tone gave life to the sinking heart; she met her mother’s eyes, fixed upon her, full of pity, and in that unhopd-for mercy found courage to move forwards, and voice to speak.

‘As Mr. Spindler has left the explanation to me, my dearest mother, I will do it in very few words, while your goodness gives me strength. Mr. Lyndon, from unforeseen circumstances, became this gentleman’s debtor for two thousand pounds, which he was unable to pay when required. The persecution we suffered made him gladly accept the accommodation offered by—by a generous friend; and the money was paid to my father’s account in ——’s bank, just before it stopped. The news of his being thus doubly involved was brought to me by Mr. Spindler, when you were lying ill at our house. The dread of exposing you to outrage, the pre-



carious state of Mr. Lyndon's nerves, his urgent entreaties, and the hope that a respite might save him from complete ruin, induced me to sign a bond for the whole amount. This bond I am now called upon to pay, or I shall be arrested at your door. Mother, this was the secret I could not tell you, because it was not my own: but the very night you sent for me I had written you the whole particulars, in a letter which has been lost. Much as I have longed to do so, I have not been equal to writing it again; and you know when I have attempted to speak to you on business, you desired me to wait till you were less engaged. This is the simple truth. I did not anticipate that even Mr. Spindler would have selected such a time to treat me as he has done to-day; and in telling you all this I feel most bitterly how much you have to pardon; but oh, if you can—you who have pardoned so much already, forgive the affront of which I have been the cause, and save me, defenceless as I am, from the cruelty of a man who, from the moment he discovered where he could wound me most grievously, has never spared me a single blow that he had power to inflict!

She felt Lady Delaunay tenderly draw her arm in hers, and her head sank on her shoulder. 'Ah, mother,' she said; 'in taking me back you must lay your account with sorrow and trouble—for I bring them with me wherever I go!'

'Sit down, my love,' said Lady Delaunay, gently placing her in a chair, and passing her hand caressingly over her hair; 'fear nothing, but trust to me. From sorrow I cannot shield you, it is our heritage; but from outrage and persecution, I can and will. On one subject I can relieve you at once, and only wish I had known your uneasiness before. Your letter was not lost—I have it now.'

Adelaide almost sprang from her seat; her mother gently kept her down.

'I found it the night you arrived, and seeing it directed to myself, took it for granted you had placed it there intentionally. You were too unwell for me to enter on the subject afterwards, but I thought you understood by my manner that all was to be as you wished. I was certainly not more prepared than yourself for the severe measures this gentleman seems disposed to employ, but I had already taken steps for his complete satisfaction, and can only regret he should have had so much unnecessary trouble. If I do not mistake, the friend whom I appointed to call about this very business is just arrived, and it can be wound up immediately.'

She gave a sign to Anderson, who had just opened the door, and he directly after announced Mr. Henry Lyndon. The cordial manner in which the Countess received him, was inexpressibly gratifying to Lady Adelaide, who, on her part, could only press his

hand in both hers, without saying a word. His presence was a real support and protection, as welcome in its way as her mother's; and to see him on friendly terms in that house was an implied amnesty for the past, to which even in that moment she could not be insensible. A few words passed between him and Lady Delaunay, and then she beckoned to her daughter to come to the writing-table at which she had seated herself.

'From what I told you of my affairs, my dear Adelaide,' she said, gravely, but kindly, 'you can understand that I am not in the habit of keeping any considerable sum at my banker's; and it required a little consideration and arrangement to do what I resolved I would directly I read your letter. I put the matter into the hands of Mr. Henry Lyndon, that we might have the double advantage of friendly goodwill, as well as of practical ability, in dealing with our difficulties. You shall know exactly what has been done—there are no secrets between us henceforth. I had already received an offer for my house at Brighton, which I had not accepted, thinking I might fit it up for the use of my young people at the Home. This offer Mr. Lyndon did not consider its full value; and, in short, he has concluded a much better bargain than I could have done; and this has enabled me to transfer to your account at C—'s bank, the sum of £5000, at your complete disposal. Draw your own cheque for this immediate necessity; and then employ the residue for Mr. Lyndon's accommodation, in whatever way your cousin recommends, and as your duty and gratitude prompt you.'

She rose as she spoke these last words, and signed to her to take her place. Lady Adelaide's heart was too full for any expression of what she felt, but she clasped her mother's hand tightly, and pressed it to her lips, giving Henry a look, at the same time, that was eloquent in its silence. He, remembering how and where he had last seen them together, returned the look with one that showed he understood its meaning; and found a moment to whisper his warm satisfaction at the change. She struggled to reply. 'Now you see what *she* is, you see what I have been. How can I ever requite such goodness?'

'I will show you presently. Let us first finish what we have to do. If you will be good enough to step this way, Mr. Spindler, we will settle all this in a few minutes.'

Mr. Spindler had no excuse for delay, whatever might have been his private inclinations; and the necessary forms being gone through, the business was speedily arranged. Lady Delaunay then turned to him with the same unruffled politeness she had preserved all along. 'Have you any further claims on Lady Adelaide Lyndon's time, sir?'

'N—no—I cannot say—I do not think I have, exactly,' said he,

smoothing his hat, and enraged with himself for feeling somewhat confounded.

‘Then I think, sir, we need no longer trespass upon yours. Mr. Lyndon, may I trouble you? Thank you.’

‘Do you mean to turn me out of your house, madam?’ cried he, flashing red, and speaking thick with excessive rage. ‘What do you take me for that you treat me like this?’

‘That, sir, is immaterial. The society in which I first met you is your claim at present, which I am unwilling to forget; and therefore have the honour to wish you good morning. The door, Anderson.’

‘You hear, Mr. Spindler?’ said Henry, emphatically, seeing him not disposed to move; and advancing a step with an unmistakeable gesture of menace. His interference seemed the unkindest cut of all, and spite giving him the courage he had been struggling for in vain, he turned and faced Lady Delaunay boldly for the first time.

‘I thank you, madam; I never forget an affront, and you shall, sooner or later, remember this. My Lady Adelaide knows me of old, and can tell you the same. I have had many from her, but I can truly say I bear her no malice. Let her do what she will, we are quits, and I am satisfied; for if she lives to be a hundred, she will never quite forget the fright she has had to-day. I leave her the recollection, as a parting token of the profound respect and admiration I feel for her person, her character, and her improved position in society.’

He bowed low, and drew nearer the door; but their silence provoking him beyond bearing, his spleen could not be restrained from another burst.

‘If your ladyship means to patch up Mr. Lyndon’s affairs, you have undertaken a pleasant task, and clever as my friend here may be, I advise you to look sharp about it, or you may be too late. I did my best in the proposal I made my Lady Adelaide, which, of course, is considered amazing presumption on my part. But it may be just as well to remind great ladies who think themselves so much better than other people—I *will* speak, Henry Lyndon! Mind your own affairs, sir! This lady *shall* hear plain speaking for once—to remind Lady Delaunay that at the time I laid a princely fortune at her daughter’s feet, for all she is an Earl’s daughter, she had not a home of her own to put her head into, and couldn’t pay for her charities without selling her wardrobe—while her own mother was rolling in riches, and never cared sixpence whether she had any wardrobe to sell!’

‘One word more,’ said Henry Lyndon, ‘and I shall pitch you into the hall. You know how to take a hint as well as most men—take this, and go.’

His menacing air, and indignant eye, the more significant from his habitual coolness, had their effect, for Mr. Spindler retreated hastily, not feeling at all sure that the threat would not be executed. Henry was following him indeed with rather ominous *empressement*, when Lady Delaunay's voice arrested his steps. 'Do not touch him—do not answer him, Mr. Lyndon. His rebuke is just. Yes,' she added as the door closed on the enemy, and she turned to look in her daughter's face, with a gaze dimmed by emotion, 'he spoke more truly than he knew; and mean as is the instrument, I know whence comes the blow. I was too unrelenting with you, Adelaide; I ought to have sought you out, not waited for your seeking me; and the friend we have buried to-day was the first who had courage to tell me so. Before your cousin, who has so often witnessed my inflexibility—before your friend and relation, who first witnessed our estrangement, I acknowledge what no one ever heard me do before—as I vowed I would do, that terrible night, when I trembled for Walter's life—if you failed in your duty to me, I failed in mine to you still more. Your humility and patience have put me to shame, and the pardon you have found so hard to win, I ask you now to grant to me.'

She held out her hands beseechingly to her daughter, whom this acknowledgment so touched and troubled, that she could make no answer, except by clasping them in her own. But Henry Lyndon spoke, and with the earnest gravity of one who had a right to be heard.

'The friend who showed you that proof of courage, Lady Delaunay, has left, not only an example behind her to be followed, but the means and obligation of following it. In her name and in the name of the truth, which your magnanimity has enabled you to see in part, but cannot in the whole—I beg you to allow me a few minutes' private conversation, that I may discharge a duty I promised should be performed to-day.'

His earnestness startled them all. 'Certainly,' said Lady Delaunay, 'this instant, if you will; your request is too solemnly worded to admit of hesitation. Will you step into Lord Delaunay's study? We shall be there most secure from interruption.'

As she moved to lead the way, Miss Conway, who had listened with a changing countenance, hurriedly interposed. 'Why all this mystery? Why may we not be present? What can that dear lost friend have wished to be said that *I* was not to hear; *I*, who was everything to her, and nursed her to the last, and whom she loved as her own child?'

'That, madam,' said Henry, calmly, 'you will hear from Lady Delaunay as soon as she thinks fit. My duty is simply with her, at present. I may have to trouble you afterwards, as well as

Lady Adelaide, as there are circumstances to be mentioned, that are best done in the presence of both.'

'You will oblige me, then,' said Lady Delaunay, 'if you will both wait here till I call you. I will not keep you in suspense longer than I can help.' She was still moving to the door, when Miss Conway clung to her arm. 'By all our long attachment, my dear aunt,' she whispered, 'do not listen to what envious detractors may say to you of me—do not let me be attacked in my absence—I know what enemies I have—in *that* family, especially.'

'You do me injustice, Charlotte, by speaking like this. Why should you imagine you will be attacked, if your conscience is clear? I promise you there shall be no mysteries where I am concerned; and truth can never hurt those who have nothing to conceal. Stay!' she said suddenly, turning as she was about to leave the room, 'before I leave you together, are you two friends?'

It was a question not easy to answer in a hurry. 'Go, my dear mother,' said Adelaide, with a half smile, 'we shall be better able to tell you when we know ourselves.'

Her own heart was so lightened, and her conscience so free from dread, that notwithstanding the conviction so slowly and reluctantly forced upon her, that the cousin on whom she had so confidently relied, had been more of an enemy than a friend; as she looked now in her face, so terribly altered since they last met, and old habits, old associations, old memories crowded upon her thoughts, resentment and distrust melted into regretful pity; and she would willingly have forgiven all the past, to have been able to believe and love her once more. But the gathering brow and whitening lip with which Miss Conway returned her gaze, told plainly that *she*, at least, was not disposed to forgive; her excitement of mind completely overthrowing her ordinary suavity and self-restraint.

'*Friends?*' she repeated with emphatic bitterness; 'how can we meet as friends, when the first result of your presence is to alter her manner to me, and let in detractors and mischief-makers to poison her mind against me? What is that relation of yours going to do? I presume you are in his secrets, and I have a right to ask if I am in any way implicated.'

'I know no more than this,' replied Adelaide, firmly but mildly, 'that whatever he does, he will do conscientiously, and like a gentleman.'

'A lawyer's conscience—we all know what that means, my dear. Whatever may serve his client he will conscientiously do, no doubt. And so that you gain your own ends, what does it matter to you?'

'I have not deserved this language, Charlotte, and I have no wish to return it. If we cannot meet as friends, let me, at least, be spared the pain of insult.'

‘Whose fault is it that we are not friends? Have I not stood yours, many and many a time, at great risk, and without reward?’

‘I thought so once, and relied upon you—too long. I do not wish to reproach you—I have received too much mercy myself to accuse another; but the advice you gave me yesterday was so fearfully like that which first misled me so many years ago, that I tremble to think what I might have become, had your influence over me remained what it was.’

‘Indeed? There is certainly a marked change in your disposition since I first, as you say, began to mislead you. There was a time when you would no more have crouched in the dust before your mother, as you have done, and are doing every hour, than you would have begged for alms in the highway. My advice was sent to the high-spirited girl I remembered of old, not to the worldly-wise woman I find you to be. You seem to understand the nature you have to deal with, so far; and by allowing her to set her foot upon your neck, you have gained something; you are permitted to be dependent on her bounty, as long as you have no will but hers, and obey the lifting of her finger. How long will that be? Are you prepared for what is before you? Do you think when all this first feeling is over, either of you can forget the past? Will not everything remind you of it? Does not every friend, every servant, know you are received back as an undeserved favour? Can you ever cross the hall without remembering *how* you crossed it once? Or if *you* would gladly forget, will *she*? Never, and you know it. She may formally accuse herself of having been harsh, she may gratify her own generosity by freeing you from debt—but of her own love of power and domination, she will not concede a hair’s-breadth; and the more you bow to the yoke, the heavier will it become.’

Lady Adelaide’s head drooped, and her eyes rested on the floor. She knew the picture to be overdrawn, and yet it struck her too forcibly for a reply. Miss Conway paused to listen for a moment; walked to and fro in fierce impatience, and then stopped to relieve herself by another thrust.

‘Of course, directly she came back from Cannymoor, I could see there was a change—I was prepared for it; and little time as there has been for conversation since her return from France, her manner plainly shows she is altered towards me. She says there are points that require explanation—I know what that means; I shall be called to account for all I have tried to do for you; and no one will remember what I have gone through; how I have filled up the place her rebellious daughter left empty, watching over her as if she had been my own mother, and trying to save her from wretchedness whenever I could. No, it will be said I kept you

apart ; I am prepared for that. There is one, who to injure me, will say anything. I can tell her, and I will, that had you met before, such was your disposition, you would soon have quarrelled again—as you would now in a month, were it not that you have lost every spark of spirit you once had, and are content, if you may not sit at the table, to stoop to gather the crumbs !’

Again she stopped to listen ; again paced the length of the apartment with restless steps ; and again turned upon Adelaide, as she stood silent and thoughtful, attempting neither defence nor retort.

‘One thing more. I know whose influence is at work—has been, for some time, in more ways than one. I know who travelled up with you to town, and to whom you are beholden for your expenses on the road ; not the first time, if my informant spoke truth, that his purse had been at your disposal. Times are changed with you indeed, if this be so ; but the purse, as I remember it, used not to be so well worth accepting. I see I am offending you, and yet speak I must. He knows that I know *him*, and as his object will be to throw discredit on my evidence, *I* know what to expect as soon as he appears. Hear me, therefore, while you can, and disbelieve me if you dare. Sooner or later—it may be years first, it may then be only by degrees, but it must in time—the revelation of what he is will break upon you—the depths of that cold, base selfishness that will trample over the ruins of a lifetime, sooner than forego a gratification—the deliberate cruelty, that can see tears of blood wrung out by the agony it has caused, and yet remain callous and relentless still ! Yes, the flame that he braved, the sea from which he escaped so narrowly, were a milder fate than the doom of being linked to a heart more cruel than the fire, more remorseless than the wave ! When that day comes, remember at least you were warned—though the warning was unthanked, and in vain !’

She stopped suddenly, as if she heard something—hurried to the door, and, after a moment’s hesitation, out of the room.

Adelaide raised her head when she was left alone, and looked round at the well-remembered room and pictures ; every piece of furniture the same as she had so often seen in her mind’s vision ; the pattern of the carpet, the bronzes on the mantelpiece, every outline, every tint so familiar, and yet so strange to her eye—reminding her that she was once more at home. Was not the wish of her heart given to her, as her poor friend had prayed it might be ; and ought she not to be happy ? But if those bitter words proved true, would her punishment be over ?

‘It is true, and I cannot deny it,’ she thought ; ‘and she knew I could not. *I am* here on sufferance, and through undeserved

mercy; I have forfeited my birthright; my boy and I must wait as pensioners on her bounty and love, for even the liberty of self-maintenance is no longer mine. She can forgive, but never forget or blot out the past; and if I grow restless and impatient, and offend her again—oh, my ungrateful, distrustful heart! Is not all this beyond what I deserve, beyond what I once dared to hope? Shall I not, with the blessing, accept *the lowest room*, knowing that I have one compensating gift that outweighs all I lost—my own precious boy, whose sweet face has done more to win their hearts than anything else in the world could have done? But what can be the reason of Charlotte's insulting language? How have I deserved that she should treat me so, and why on that one subject is she so bitter, so unjust? *He* cold-hearted—selfish—indifferent to the sufferings or others? I were ungrateful indeed to think so for a moment. Is it possible? Yes, it must be so. I have all this time been looked upon as a rival; this explains all. Why did it never occur to me before?

‘Adelaide!’

It was her mother's voice, hasty and imperative. She obeyed the summons immediately. Lady Delaunay had the study door open in her hand, and was beckoning to her with an impatience very unlike her usual manner. As Adelaide entered, the first object she saw was Charlotte Conway, her face dark with conflicting passions, her hands tightly clenching some papers she seemed to have crumpled up in a burst of indignation, her eyes gleaming resentment and rage, mixed with confusion. Henry, his keen features bright with the energy of battle, stood by the table, cool and collected as usual; but Lady Delaunay's gesture, as she closed the door, and turned to her daughter, was so stern, that innocent as she felt of any unacknowledged offence, Adelaide trembled as she looked.

‘My dearest mother, what is it? What have I done?’

‘Adelaide! I am going to ask you some questions; and as you value my love—my blessing—my confidence—so lately restored, answer me truly, without hesitation, or fear of the consequences. Your cousin denies the truth of all other evidence, so I am compelled to appeal to yours. Was she, or was she not, by her aid and advice, a party to your marriage?’

The eye, the tone, admitted of no delay; Adelaide could only reply, ‘She was—but as it was done for me, I alone am to blame.’

‘Did she, or did she not, lead you to believe that the regiment was ordered to India through *my* influence?’

‘She did, indeed: we both believed it. Oh, mother!’

‘Did she, or did she not, convey to you a message from me, so insulting towards your husband, that you were stung into writing



me a letter, which I said should be the last I would receive? You alluded to it at Cannymoor, and I thought then there had been some mistake.'

'Oh, I have so hoped since that there had! Was I then mistaken? You did not mean what I thought, my dear, dear mother? Why, did I not know it sooner?'

Lady Delaunay sat down by the table, and covered her face with her hands. Her last ray of hope was gone. Miss Conway folded her arms and knitted her brows in dogged defiance; her whole countenance so transformed from its ordinary expression as to be hardly recognizable. If her features had been cast in iron they could not have shown less emotion. All further denial being unavailing, desperation conquered shame, and borrowed strength from rage and hate. Adelaide, however, was too anxious to think of her; she bent over her mother, and watched her struggles for composure, dreading a return of the attack she had witnessed once before. To her great relief, they proved successful. When Lady Delaunay raised her head, her austerity and firmness were restored.

'A momentary weakness may be pardoned me,' she said, 'in losing for ever what I loved so well. Yes, Charlotte, you know how I have loved you—confided in you—relied upon you; I cannot dwell upon that; I only know, it was so startling a blow to have even a doubt cast upon your truth, that when it was first done I could not face it—nor would I allow a word to be repeated in your disparagement, till I had means and time to investigate, and do you justice. This is now given; I know enough to satisfy me of the rest, and my confidence is taken from you—for ever! Adelaide, my daughter, restored to me at last to compensate for all beside, give me your hand, look me in the face: will you believe what I am going to say? I knew his regiment *would* be ordered out—it was one reason for my disapprobation—but I had no more to do with it than you had. Yes, it was a cruel falsehood, cruel to us both. You thought I sacrificed him, and therefore sacrificed yourself, poor child! I see it now. But what will you say when I tell you that message was never sent at all? I sent you one which I hoped would open a door of return; asking for your confidence about the actual state of your husband's affairs, that I might, if possible, enable you to begin the world without a worse burden than inexperience, and show you the way to make me your friend. Receiving the answer I did, I vowed I would receive no more without being firmly convinced of your repentance and submission; and the only link I would allow between us—I could not cast you off entirely—was the affection I believed to exist between you two, so that through her the first evidence would

come to me of your being really changed—as I hoped and prayed so many years, and seemed to do all in vain.’

Lady Adelaide’s changing face, as she listened, was a sufficient index of the astonishment she had no words to express. The first glow was of grateful joy, to find that the merciless judge, the inexorable minister of vengeance, whom she had so often despaired of softening—from first to last, had loved and mourned over her, and would have pardoned and saved her, if she could ! But as the real truth became gradually clear, and the magnitude of the injury was revealed—as she thought of her long fruitless efforts and disappointments, and saw now how they had all been baffled—her excitement became so powerful as well-nigh to overcome her fortitude. She flung her hands up for a moment, as one who sees a frightful vision ; then pressing them convulsively upon her bosom, walked rapidly up and down the room, hardly aware of what she was doing. Her nature was too generous ever to have suspected anything worse than gradual estrangement on the part of her once intimate companion ; such deliberate, wilful enmity and treachery struck her with horror for their own wickedness, with anguish for having been their object so long, and with a burning sense of injury and wrong, that almost suffocated her. At the moment when her mother, alarmed by her agitation, was rising to soothe it, and Henry was endeavouring to open the window, Lord Delaunay came in. Adelaide uttered a half shriek, and rushing forwards, flung her arms round his neck.

‘Bertram ! Bertram ! Bertram ! It might all have been prevented, all have been remedied ! Oh, my God ! help me to forgive as I am forgiven ! But all these years—all this bitterness—and she might have saved me—and would not !’

And now the torrent gushed forth, as on that day at Cannymoor Rectory ; and struggle as she might to recover her breath, the sobs came faster and faster, till she was quite exhausted, and sat passively at last, supported by his arm, her pleading eyes stopping the half-spoken command to retire and rest that Lady Delaunay was inclined to enforce. Rest just then, before she knew all that was to be told, would, she felt, be out of the question ; and she waited anxiously for her brother to speak, seeing by his face, that he, too, had something to reveal. His first words, however, were to ask the meaning of all this ; and Henry Lyndon, in obedience to the Countess’s desire, at once explained.

He related in concise language the history of General Conway’s papers, known to the reader already, as far as he himself knew it : the two missing packets he could account for on satisfactory evidence—that of the person who saw Miss Conway take them out of Mrs. Marden’s writing case—Miss Brittan ; and of the person who

saw Miss Conway burn them—her late attendant, Mrs. Forrest. Of the third, he then proceeded to relate, that being requested about three weeks ago, to convey Lady Adelaide Lyndon's apology to Mrs. Marsden, for the unwarrantable use Mr. Spindler had made of her name, in intruding himself upon her society—he had done himself the honour of calling upon her, and been admitted to a long private conversation.

‘It struck me at first,’ he said, ‘that she was altered, and that she seemed to have some difficulty in recollecting events and names : but after a time this passed off, and the questions she put gave me an opportunity of satisfying her mind, on several points that she owned she had been unable to understand. The next day I received a note, requesting me to call again. I did so, and found her, this time, in perfect possession of her faculties, and labouring under no small excitement of feeling ; our conversation had recalled to her mind the packet of papers she had nearly forgotten, and finding Mr. Randolph's return uncertain, she had resolved on examining it thoroughly herself. It had been a great exertion of nerves and eyesight, but it had been accomplished, and all her anxiety now was to put it into safer keeping than her own. She told me then, she thought her time was short, and delivered me the packet, with a solemn injunction, in the event of her death, to deliver it personally into the hands of Lady Delaunay, as soon as possible after the funeral. I promised I would, and I have kept my promise. The result has surpassed even my anticipations.’

He paused for a moment ; all eyes were riveted by the animated earnestness of his manner—even those of Miss Conway ; though a slight convulsive twitching of her face was the only indication of her being moved by the recital.

‘When I was last in this room,’ he resumed, ‘I was pleading Lady Adelaide's cause, almost hopelessly—so impenetrable seemed the barriers that fenced her from all she loved. I pleaded it then, on the ground of her punishment being heavier than her crime : knowing as I did, how bitterly she suffered. On that occasion I first became aware who was her real enemy in the matter, and from that time have done my best to counteract her influence. This hour recompenses everything. Lady Adelaide's happiness is now in the hands of her mother ; and I, and all who love and respect her—as every one who has known her conduct in adversity, and her patience in suffering, must and ever will—feel that whatever wrong we have done her, will be atoned, and whatever wish we have formed for her, will be more than fulfilled.’

The cordial grasp of the Earl's extended hand was sufficient proof how heartily he appreciated and sympathized with him ; but before he could answer, Miss Conway haughtily rose.

‘I was unwilling to interrupt the flow of Mr. Lyndon’s eloquence,’ she said; ‘but I think I have borne nearly enough for the present. I was quite prepared to meet with injustice as soon as a certain influence had time to work; but now that I find there has been so much underhand intrigue going on, that a silly girl whom we know to have neither sense nor principle, and a maid I discharged for insolence, are quoted as authorities for what I have done, or not done—I can only smile at the affront, and wonder my aunt should condescend to avail herself of such instruments. I scorn to enter into explanations: if my private correspondence is to be handed about from one to another, garbled and perverted to suit the views of those interested in my detraction—if everything I do or say, or have not done or said, is to be watched, commented upon, and misrepresented—I feel the sooner I am out of everybody’s way the better; and if Lord Delaunay will extend his courtesy sufficiently to lend me the carriage, which I see is still at the door, I am quite sure Mrs. Knighton will kindly allow me the shelter of her house. There is one thing more I would observe. With regard to the opinion of my late beloved friend and relative, however her easy nature may have been perplexed and harassed by the whisperers who stole in upon her whenever my back was turned, and whose suggestions troubled even her dying hours, I do not for a moment believe she expected or wished me to be treated like this! I believe, on the contrary, she has left convincing proof behind her of the esteem in which she held my character and affection; and that Lord Delaunay, anxious as he may be to delay the acknowledgment, has that proof with him at this moment!’

‘Is this the case, Delaunay?’ asked his mother, gravely; seeing him hesitate, and his colour rise, as if he certainly had something that he was reluctant to tell.

‘Something very like it,’ said he, with a shake of the head, and he put a letter into her hand. ‘Gower, her solicitor, gave me that; it is, as you see, addressed to us both, and he had charge of it with the will.’

Lady Delaunay unfolded the paper with a trembling hand, and her eyes grew dim at the sight of the large, straggling writing—the last that feeble hand had ever penned.

‘I may not live to see you again, dearest Mary, and my dear cousin Delaunay, but I hope you will not refuse to execute my will. I think I have carried out the general’s wishes—he would never have encouraged disobedience or rebellion; but what can a poor girl do to atone for a fault, but repent and amend? She has had much wrong, and a great deal of sorrow, and I feel sure when you know all, you will think I have only done justice. Give her

my love and blessing, and tell her my last prayer is, that she may make as good use of prosperity as she has of trouble. God bless you all ! J. M.'

Miss Conway, who had listened, as if stiffening into stone, now broke in with the scarcely intelligible question, 'And the will ?'

'There are *two* wills,' said Lord Delaunay ; 'one dated some two or three years—and the other a fortnight ago. The contents of the first I conclude you know already—it was in your favour ; the other bequeaths everything, after payment of sundry legacies—to Adelaide.'

She was silent for a moment, as if stunned ; and so livid grew her face, that both gentlemen simultaneously stepped forward to offer her support. The next instant, however, she had recovered her strength, and then the full tide of disappointment and fury came rolling too fiercely and too fast for any ordinary restraint, and the outward control that education, refinement, and regard for the opinion of the world, exercise over evil passions even where principle is not at work to root them out, proving inadequate to this unexpected assault, a torrent of violence and invective, discharging all the pent-up bitterness concealed so long, poured forth unchecked—such as bowed Adelaide's head as if the shame had been her own, and left Lady Delaunay's cheeks as white as her hair. Tenderness, respect, gratitude, were all forgotten : as if a fiend prompted her tongue, she taunted them all wherever she knew them to be most sensitive ; till at last, when all other sarcasm seemed to fail, it came to a bitter derision on Delaunay's courage and manly honour, who had been beholden for his life in the water to the man he durst not encounter by land !

The Earl broke from his sister's clinging hold, and strode up to the infuriated woman with an eye that flashed as keenly as her own.

'You have said a thing now that you can never recall. While I could believe that your slander of a gallant gentleman arose from error of judgment or misunderstanding, I screened you like a brother from the consequences ; but an insult like this I will bear from no living creature under heaven, were she ten times my cousin ; and out of this house to-day, either you will depart—or I !'

She wrapped her cloak round her, and moved towards the door.

'I am quite ready—I told you so before—to go this instant. I am not friendless—not quite yet. You will allow me the use of your carriage as far as Mrs. Knighton's—perhaps you will be good enough to order my trunks to be sent to me there ? Thank you—then now——'

But Adelaide, who had not believed her at first to be in earnest, started up, and threw herself between her cousin and the door.

‘Not thus—not now!’ she said, extending her hands to bar her passage; ‘Charlotte, by all her love—all her goodness—all her tender care—leave her not in anger! It will be a blight on your whole future life; it will darken your last hour. Pause while it is not yet too late—unsay those wild and bitter words that you could not mean, and we will all forget they were ever said. Listen for one moment—if you think you have been wronged, there is nothing I am not ready to do to satisfy you—whatever is mine you shall share—but do not let it come to this, with all this misery to be gone through over again! Oh mother, dearest mother! speak to her—she is blinded by passion, she does not know what is before her—and I *do*!’

Miss Conway involuntarily gave one glance at the friend she was losing for ever, whose stern, sorrowful gaze as it met hers, was like the last farewell of her better angel. A momentary struggle was visible in her inflamed and quivering features, and then their scornful hardness returned. She caught Adelaide’s hand in hers, wrung it twice with fierce energy, and then flung it from her.

‘Thus I thank you for your forgiveness—thus for your generosity—and thus, I reject them both! You have robbed me of everything I ever cared for in the world, and now that you think you can triumph over my fall—though it remains to be seen whether your triumph be as secure as it seems—you hope to humble me by benefits, and put to my lips the cup of humiliation that you have had to drain to the very dregs! My nature is not like yours. I neither steal out of this house in secret, nor shall I ever ask or wish to set foot within its walls again!’

She passed from the room without looking back. They heard her coolly giving her orders to the servants as if she had been going out for a customary drive, and then the hall door closed heavily behind her—and she was gone, as she had truly said, never more to return.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

Lay thy sweet hands in mine—and trust in me!—*Tennyson*.

LORD DELAUNAY had seen Mr. Randolph, as he attended Mrs. Marsden’s funeral; and in the hurried interview afterwards, which was all that time admitted, there was sufficient warmth and cordiality to show that all traces of misunderstanding were removed. A few days afterwards he called by the Countess’s own appointment, and was received by her, as before, alone in her private sitting-room. Each thought the other altered since their

last conversation there; for Maurice still walked lame, and the anxiety of his mind kept his spirits in a perpetual fret, that prevented his recovering his full vigour as fast as he wished; and Lady Delaunay, in her deep mourning, looked very much aged by recent events, and her face, though softened in its expression, was ploughed with many new lines of care. No wonder that it should, when every day, almost every hour, was revealing some new discovery of deceit and wrong; such as it required all the comfort of her daughter's restoration and presence to help her to bear. It would take them long, very long, to unravel all that had been so skilfully tangled in the past—and but for the treasure she had found, the thought of that which she had not only lost, but knew now that she had only dreamed of possessing, would have left such a blank in Lady Delaunay's heart, as even her high-toned fortitude might have found too terrible to endure. Randolph knew how much she must have suffered, and it deepened the emotion with which he bowed over the hands that clasped his so warmly, and received her blessing—more solemn and heartfelt even than that with which she had bade him farewell.

'I little thought what services you were to render me before I saw you again, Mr. Randolph. My son has been looking forward to the time when he could ask your forgiveness and friendship: and indeed, if you will not accept the one, we can have little comfort in the other. My daughter found you a friend indeed when she most wanted one: she must thank you herself; we were little aware of what she was doomed to undergo, and which she would never have borne so well but for your kindness and care.'

He stammered something about his hope that she had recovered—that the accident and exposure to weather had not produced any serious effect—that Walter was progressing, and so on—trying hard to put questions of ordinary politeness, and feeling every moment less and less able to understand what he was saying. She kindly turned the subject to more general matters; talked about his journey, his convalescence, and his French friends; and when these failed, helped him out with topics of commonplace conversation, without seeming to notice how wide some of his answers were from the mark; and by the time they had run through the general subjects of the day, he had begun to recover some of his presence of mind and nerve. Then there came a pause, and a short silence, that gave him time to lose them again.

'Do you remember, Mr. Randolph,' said Lady Delaunay, presently, in a voice slightly tremulous, 'a conversation we had the last time you were in this room?'

'Every word—every look, Lady Delaunay.'

'I fear both words and looks disappointed you more than once. Have you heard the end of your poor *protégée's* sad history?'

'Yes—I understand she just lived to see her mother—no more.'

'She did—the pardon came, but too late for either, and the mother has never recovered the blow. Had she listened to your pleading sooner, she would have spared herself this crowning grief. Do you remember how you told me that story—and why?'

He looked at her intently, but in silence.

'Do you remember how I stopped you, when you were about to tell me something I would not, could not listen to then?'

'Yes,' he said, still keeping his eyes fixed upon her.

'Is there anything now you wish to tell me, that you think it right I should know?'

The colour flew to his face: his heart beat so fast as almost to paralyze his utterance: he bent before her in a supplicating attitude.

'Do not tempt me by too much condescension and kindness beyond my strength, or I shall speak what will be past my power or yours to recall, however we may both desire it.'

'I owe you so much,' she said, smiling, 'I could not easily be made to take offence. Remember, I am in your debt for a favour, and if you prefer to use the privilege of telling me some unpalatable truths, I can bear them. I have borne many lately, and tell myself as many more.'

'It will be an unpalatable truth, I feel, if it fails to give offence; but you urge me on, and I am powerless to resist. Hear my confession, and pardon it if you can. For years, Lady Delaunay—years that seem a lifetime to look back upon, I have loved your daughter; but I have never yet told her so. My conduct in the matter has been vilified, my motives misconstrued: it is now due to my honour that I should be allowed to speak openly for myself; and the impatience with which I have waited to do it, and which hurries me on now at this somewhat unseasonable time, you would pity, if you knew what it was to have borne hopelessness so long, and to have a ray of hope at last. I have never had reason to suppose my attachment returned; I am perfectly aware of her superiority in every way to myself; but an attachment that nothing has been able to shake, that everything has but served to strengthen, is the utmost a man can offer a woman, and I dare not despair till I know the worst. Lady Delaunay,' he continued, sinking on one knee before her, 'you gave me your blessing when we parted last, and its wings were those of a guardian angel in my hour of temptation and danger. If it was indeed more than a form of words, that passed your lips, but came not from your heart—renew it to me now, and once more bid me God-speed where my all



is at stake. Let me have your generous approval of what I do, and be the result what it may, I shall be better able to bear it.'

She trembled, but not with anger; her emotion would hardly let her speak.

'Have you realized what a sacrifice you are asking of me? Not of ambition—not of pride—which in the light of another world appear differently to what they did once—but of happiness? I have only just recovered my lost treasure; her health, her spirits, want all that care and tenderness can do to restore their tone: we have years of sorrow to obliterate—we had just planned how we were to work henceforth in company; can I cheerfully give all this up to another? Can you ask it?'

'If you tell me it would risk her health, or disturb her peace, I shall believe you, Lady Delaunay, and depart. I can say no more, do no more than that: human strength can be tasked no further. Tell me so plainly and seriously, and I will ask nothing—not even a blessing; it would avail me little. Only do not let me see her, for that I could not bear. It would be too cruel.'

He had risen, and stood before her in an attitude of dignified respect, waiting for her next words. Before they were spoken, the door was softly opened, and Lady Adelaide, not knowing that her mother was engaged, came in to let her know that Emma Lyndon was waiting to see her.

The pleasure she had just been enjoying in imparting all her present gladness, and future plans, to the friend whose affectionate sympathy had cheered her darkest hours, and was ready now to rejoice in her returning joy—had brightened the lustre of her eyes, and suffused her cheeks; and Randolph, with her last look of mortal agony still vividly fresh in his remembrance, was dazzled by the change. His first involuntary impulse was to step forwards; but checking himself, he stopped short with a low bow. Her surprise at finding him there was not diminished by the evident agitation in the countenances of both; but she advanced instantly with a blushing smile, extending her hand so cordially, while expressing her grateful sense of his kindness, he had no choice but to grasp it; and then did not know how to let it go again. He cast an imploring glance on Lady Delaunay. Her magnanimity could not withstand the appeal.

'As you are here, my dear Adelaide, you can help me out of a little difficulty. I believe you have some accounts to settle with Mr. Randolph yourself; will you undertake mine as well?' She took a small parcel out of a drawer. 'This has involved me in a serious liability. It was always valuable—it has become by circumstances inestimably precious; for it has passed through a treasury that stamps on it a value, not of this world. I have been

called upon to pay a heavy price; perhaps you may find my creditor more reasonable. At any rate, I leave it in your hands, while I go and talk to my kind little nurse. I shall abide by your arbitration, let it cost me what it may.'

She put her hand on her daughter's shoulder, looked in her face with a penetrating, tender smile, dimmed by gathering tears; and before she could ask her meaning, left them together.

Trembling, she knew not why, Lady Adelaide sat down and opened the sealed packet. The colour fitted to her temples as she recognized the lace; and she looked up at Randolph, who was standing before her, leaning on a chair, as he had done that night they met at Cannymoor.

'Oh, Lady Adelaide!' he said, in a soft and pleading voice, strangely in contrast with his manner *then*, 'has restored prosperity made you merciful? Can you bear to hear of presumption, of arrogance, of futile attempts to bring you under obligation—of proud, self-complacent dreams of a time when you should owe your happiness to me, whether that thought embittered it, or not—dreams that have passed away in failure and defeat, reducing me to throw myself on your generosity, and ask for pardon as an unmerited gift? Yes, that lace is a witness of one of my presumptuous attempts in your service; I led your mother on unawares till she knew the whole of the story connected with it, hoping it might lead her to a softened frame of mind towards *you*. I have always clung to the belief that it did; the dying prayer of the poor woman you saved has in your own case been granted; I see you now as I have yearned to see you—in your own sphere—among your own kindred—loved, cherished, and honoured—without the bitter drawback of owing it to me. And I rejoice from my soul—I always *shall* rejoice at that, whatever fate may be reserved for *me*. But can you, in the calm of your own happiness and peace, pity one, whose exile has been longer, whose estrangement more hopeless, whose yearning for reconciliation more intense, whose grief for past errors more poignant than your own? If you can, give me but one pardoning look or sign, and it will strengthen me to tell you all—all that I must tell, and you cannot refuse to hear, in justice to yourself and me.'

She had bowed her face till now; when she slowly raised her eyes to his impassioned countenance.

'I did think, Mr. Randolph, that I had forfeited your esteem, and the pain was so much heightened by consciousness of undeserving, I can hardly feel it a matter for forgiveness. If you in turn can forgive me all the grief I have caused you—most unwittingly—you will relieve my gratitude of half its weight; and we will mutually agree to blot out the past.'

'Blot out the past?' he said, earnestly; 'can I do so, even at your bidding? Can I forget what you were to me, what you always have been—so unutterably dear, even when I resented your conduct most, that nothing the world could offer would tempt me to part with your image in my soul, whether it haunted me to goad or to cheer? Yes, if I had won you *then*, I might wish that remembrance blotted out, for its record would have been my shame; but as you always were, always will be, the sole object I ever loved with my whole heart and being, that heart and being must cease to exist before the chain of association is broken. Now you know the utmost,' he continued, as he sank before her, and ventured to take the hand that rested on her knee, between both his own; 'let it be esteemed presumption if you will—remind me, as you did once, of the distance between us—I admit it all, I feel it all; and yet I am daring enough to believe, that in the devotion I offer you, the single-hearted, tried, unflinching attachment which, in spite of us both, you have implanted too deeply for human power to root out—there is value enough to be not unworthy the acceptance even of the noblest—even of you!'

She did not withdraw her hand, but her head drooped on her bosom, as if one bitter remembrance weighed it down, beyond the power even of his passion to raise.

'Why,' she said, at last, 'did you ever misjudge me? Why did you withdraw your esteem, without knowing whether it was justly lost? Oh, if you really loved me, was it generous to leave me as you did, exposed to the scorn of my companion, and the perpetual reproaches of my own terrified heart? Mr. Randolph, I soon learned to regret bitterly the hasty words I used, and never again allowed a breath to sully the image of stainless honour which you always bore in my remembrance; but you acted, unknowingly, so cruel a part to one who had looked up to you as a brother and guide, that it has taken years of trial and sorrow to undo the evil; for in losing your esteem, I lost my own, and with it, my strength against temptation; and then——'

'Oh, hear me!' he said, breaking in on the faltering accents that pierced him to the soul; 'you do not know all, but I do. My esteem? It was yours at that moment, as fully, as unreservedly, as if you had been indeed the angel you seemed; but an evil genius stood between us then, as she has done between you and happiness all your life, and her false tongue it was that made you believe a lie. She knew that in what she said, she should separate our hearts, as far as human power could, for ever. She very nearly succeeded; years of bitterness and misunderstanding have borne witness to her triumph, but the truth has appeared at last. Oh! forgive my share in the error, for the sake of my share in the grief!'

It was some little time before she realized what he was saying ; when she understood the real state of the case, this last revelation of perfidy nearly overpowered her. She was, in fact, no match for her enemy, every stroke went so deep ; it was not the injury alone she felt, with all its train of wrong—but the hatred that directed it—the ingenious, sleepless, unrelenting enmity that had pursued her steps so long, and whose shadow darkened over her still—giving her one new trial in the room of those just removed, in the difficulty, continually returning, of practising the grace of true forgiveness.

And yet, even then—as the mystery of the whole past became clear, there was something so strangely sad in the thought of that wasted miserable heart—disappointed of the passionate hopes, that might have redeemed its whole career—and heaping wretchedness on itself, in the insatiable pursuit of revenge—that resentment melted into pity, and her first words were to plead in her behalf. He was ready to listen to anything, when his own pleading had been heard, but as yet he had won no answer, and without it, he could not rest.

‘How shall I find words to convince you?’ she said, as he pressed her for a reply ; ‘how set before you a truth, which, if you do not see *now*, you may, when it is too late? You have given me your all—what could I give you in return? I am not what you knew me once ; the hard highway of life has worn me down ; youth has passed from me in trials, many of my own causing, mostly well-deserved—and they do not leave us the same as they found us. Kindness and affection have lightened my burden, and released me from poverty and dependence ; but it will be long, if ever, before the effect of the weight can be removed. And you, with all your gifts, your energies, your high qualifications, you have a career before you of so much usefulness and honour—that career that was our dream in early days, and which you have thrown away so long, because the image you set up proved to be clay instead of gold—now that it has been thrown down, defaced and broken, would you waste your worship on it, and suffer it to impede you still? Maurice,’ she continued with an increasing agitation that betrayed the effort it cost her—‘Maurice, my friend once more—for your own sake I entreat you to rise above this weakness ; you are reserved for a happier fate. Let me not see your whole life wasted, and have it ever on my conscience to bear the thought of what you might—what you would have been, if we had never met!’

‘Do you know what I should have been, that you tell me this? Do you know what I should be without the thought of *you*? That one affection, embittered as it was, disguised even from myself as it was, has been my safeguard in temptations that have shipwrecked thousands. It is my better, nobler self ; when I listen to its voice, the evil within me stands rebuked. If I have wasted my life and

my gifts, it has been from misusing that glorious light within, and darkening it with my own stern passions. You tell me you are not what you were ; can I not see that for myself ? You have gone through the battle, and come off with the soldier's scars, but also with the victor's crown. Sorrow has only brought out the graces that prosperity might have stifled or veiled. If I loved the gracious emanation that once seemed to be beyond the touch of care, how much more the heroic wife and mother, who braved perils that daunted the bravery of man—the angel of mercy, who out of her poverty found a home for the outcast—the noble-minded woman, who had magnanimity enough to see her past errors, and humility enough to acknowledge and atone for them ! As the Earl's daughter, or the soldier's widow, to me you are still the same Adelaide Chester, with every grand quality, whose germ I once watched with pride, developed, matured, sanctified by suffering ; and to that Adelaide Chester I make my last appeal. Can you trust your happiness to my care ?—can you try and believe in the power of devoted affection to restore the spirit so hardly bruised, and to keep all burdens henceforth from bowing it down ? Can you pardon all the past, and trust for the future, that future which to me will then only be too blest, let Heaven's gracious will have in store for us what it may ?

' Ah, Maurice—trust you ?—that were easy ; but how can I trust myself ?'

His answer was on the hand, pressed to his lips and heart ; and such a vow as was breathed over it—the prize despaired of so long, yielded now beyond his hopes—is but seldom so passionately uttered, and was never more devotedly kept.

The domestic annalist, whose faithful chronicle we have hitherto so closely followed, even to the verge of prolixity, suddenly fails us here ; and for such information as may be deemed necessary to complete the history, we must apply to collateral and more meagre sources ; or where these fail, have recourse to that inexhaustible museum, the imagination of the reader.

The consent of Lady Delaunay to the engagement between her daughter and Maurice Randolph, was given with all the cordiality necessary to satisfy Adelaide's feelings ; and which no one knew better how to throw into a sacrifice, where she felt it to be due. He had won upon her from the first, and where she once respected and approved, it was not difficult to secure her warm regard. The Earl openly rejoiced in the event, as the noblest amends and recompense that could be made to a man he already admired, and soon learnt to lean upon and trust ; and Randolph's energy and decision, as they became more intimate, had a marked influence in strengthening the higher points of his kind, but vacillating nature.

At Cannymoor, the sympathy that had been already strongly excited by Lady Adelaide's grief, took fire at the news of her improved prospects. The popular feeling against Mr. Spindler, for his unmanly persecution, rose so high, as to lead to a solemn decree banishing him from society; Sergeant Wade was strongly suspected of instigating the boys to pelt him if he came, and Miss Chatterley quarrelled with him by letter so sharply, it ended in his giving her notice to quit, and her taking refuge with Mrs. Grayling. Mr. Ousel made no secret of the fact that he knew a great deal to the gentleman's discredit, which only regard for his cousin induced him to conceal; and it was unanimously agreed by high and low, that let him come when he would, Cannymoor should be made too hot to hold him.

It was not destined, however, to be honoured with much more of his presence, at whatever temperature; nor was Lady Adelaide, notwithstanding all the sympathy and goodwill of kindred and friends, as yet out of the reach of such vexation and annoyance as persevering ingenuity could inflict. He had one offensive weapon left, and that he failed not to employ.

The estrangement between Miss Conway and her father's relations could not fail to excite a considerable amount of curiosity and conjecture among all who knew them personally, as well as among those who liked to appear as if they did. Mrs. Knighton sedulously spread the report, and it was diligently circulated among all her acquaintances and friends, that dear Charlotte Conway had been shamefully treated; that the Lyndons had poisoned the poor dear Countess's mind when she met with that sad accident in the country (from which she had never quite recovered); that they had, by their insinuations and perversions of truth, brought Mrs. Marsden to make a new will, in defiance of all justice and past promises; and that Lady Delaunay, under her daughter's influence, had behaved so harshly to Charlotte, it was impossible for her to remain in her house. It was altogether a great deal too bad; but everybody knew what those Chester tempers were, and the most charitably sanguine hesitated not to prophesy, that they would all quarrel again before the year was out. Meanwhile, a strong demonstration was made in favour of the ill-used victim of intrigue and misrepresentation; and if invitations for indefinite periods, and energetic declamations on her wrongs, could have consoled her for the loss of all her cherished hopes, Miss Conway received enough to satisfy the most insatiate after sympathy. But she knew too much of the world, and of her pleasant kinswoman in particular, not to be well aware, this would only last while the novelty lasted; and the prospect of dreary dependence before her, without a single hope to brighten the future, was enough to appal a stouter heart than hers—courageous

only under the stimulus of pride and passion; but cowardly by nature, as deceivers always are. The loss of Mrs. Marsden's fortune, on which she had so confidently relied, to compensate for every other, was a crushing blow from which she could not recover; the small legacy left her in the new will seemed only an aggravation of the disappointment, and she brooded over her own want of vigilance in leaving her so many hours unguarded, with a bitter self-reproach, that gave her no rest night or day. In one of her gloomiest moods—the report of Adelaide's engagement had just been brought in, and freely discussed—she received a visit from Mr. Spindler. She had always treated him with marked civility, 'as Adelaide's friend,' in the belief that nothing would so effectually disgust Lady Delaunay with her daughter's connexions, as such a specimen of Cannymoor society; but in using him as an instrument, she had not been aware how far she had laid herself open to a penetration as keen-sighted as her own. That peculiar gift, which he lost no opportunity of exercising—of finding out all the private family politics of everybody over whom he wished to obtain an influence, especially those things that they were most anxious to keep secret—had enabled him to discover her weaker side, and make his assault accordingly. He offered her wealth, independence, and revenge, in one—with his hand in marriage.

And against this offer she had nothing to oppose, but that she despised his low extraction, had no opinion of his principles, and considered his person and manners equally objectionable—cogent reasons enough, but not equal to those they had to conquer. The satisfaction of galling the Delaunay pride by such a connexion, the dread of poverty and insignificance, the desperation of disappointment, defeat, and shame, making her reckless of the good opinion she had so long struggled to retain at all hazards, all helped to consummate the transaction. Mrs. Knighton, a little startled at first, on cool reflection gave it her decided approval. Dear Charlotte might have been an awkwardly expensive charge in time, and involved her and the girls in some unpleasant difficulties. Now, she would be independent and settled, and if the old gentleman's manners were not quite the thing, it would all be set down to 'eccentricity'; his fortune, judiciously, not too ostentatiously managed, with a lady at the head of his house possessing so much tact and *savoir faire*, would soon remove all disagreeable first impressions; the money made all the difference; she had known men quite as vulgar received in the very highest society. On the whole, she did not see how she could have been justified in refusing such an establishment.

Her former friends made several efforts to rescue her from her impending destiny. Mr. Powys forced his way into her presence in spite of denials, and set before her, in the plainest terms, the

character of the man to whom she was selling herself—of which he knew more than most, for in his youth he had been well acquainted with the heads of the firm under which Mr. Spindler's career began, and remembered disgraceful circumstances, which, though out of compassion they had never been made public, had led to his dismissal from their employment. With the earnestness of an old friend, who felt it to be his last opportunity, he pleaded with her to pause while it was yet time; he produced a letter from Lady Adelaide, offering to make any sacrifice required, to save her cousin from a doom of which she could best estimate the horrors; he told her how Lady Delaunay mourned over her sin, and was only waiting for a sign of repentance to forgive and call her back; he wrestled with her conscience till he brought her to tears, but all in vain. She trembled, she wept, she owned she was utterly wretched, and had been for years—thanked him for his goodness, but begged him not to see her again;—her mind was made up, and even if she could, she durst not now repent.

Her marriage took place at the end of June, and the first intimation of the footing on which their new connection proposed to stand towards Lord Delaunay's family, was in the announcement of an action, brought by Mr. Spindler against the executors of the late Mrs. Marsden, to set aside her last will, on the plea of her being incapable at the time it was made.

How much pain and annoyance might ultimately have been caused by his proceeding, could only be imagined by the opening; as, before it had gone further than to give Captain Chester occasion to congratulate his relations on their going to law, with that cool dog Lyndon on their side—an unexpected circumstance caused another change of affairs.

Mr. Lyndon, though relieved from his pressing difficulties, and cordially rejoicing in his daughter-in-law's brightening future, looking upon her union with Maurice Randolph as making a welcome addition to his own family, had not recovered his spirits or serenity, and there was still cause for much anxiety respecting his health; when news came from Australia of the discovery of gold, and those who had held shares in property that had hitherto appeared valueless, suddenly found themselves realizing money in a surprisingly agreeable manner. The Squire of Cannymocr was among these fortunate persons, as he had sunk a considerable sum, of which everybody had despaired for him, though he never would own it himself. Perhaps it would have been impossible to devise any method of restoring his falling fortunes, that would have gratified him so much. His judgment was cleared—his prognostications were fulfilled—he was justified in what he had undertaken, and he had a triumph over Spindler beyond his hopes. Spindler had sneered at his expectations—had prophesied that Australian invest-



ments would never come to anything—and sold out his own, long ago, at a loss, and had always pooh-poohed everything he had said on the subject. What would the old scoundrel say now? His own affairs improved from that day; for the individual whose surety he had been, shared the tide of prosperity, and justified his good opinion by repaying all he had owed out of his first golden-harvest, so that Mr. Lyndon had the satisfaction of clearing off every incumbrance, and standing a free man in the home he had so nearly lost.

On Mr. Spindler, the effect of all this was proportionably the reverse. He could not forgive himself. To lose money was everybody's lot—but to have missed an opportunity of making it, was an unpardonable error; and he so fretted and raged over what he might have made, and what others were making, that he was seized with an attack of illness, which ended in a paralytic stroke, shattering all his powers of mind, as well as of body. The result of this was to throw him completely into the hands of his wife, who had by this time become so thoroughly disgusted with his method of waging war, that her first use of power was to stop all proceedings about the will: her second, to make him dispose of all his property at Cannymoor, and elsewhere; and her third, to carry him away with her to Paris, where they took up their permanent residence; and where her tyranny over him in his impotence was only to be equalled by the mortification his peevish vulgarity perpetually inflicted upon her. Each had gained one object of ambition, and to its enjoyment we leave them; satisfied that the bitterest enmity could doom them to nothing more.

The Cannymoor property was purchased by Lady Adelaide in the name of her son, and Mr. Lyndon had the happiness of seeing the estate, to a considerable extent, restored to the old name. She paid a long visit to her former home, before her marriage; and set on foot many of the plans she had been devising from the first moment of her prosperity. No one was omitted who had ever tried to show her a kindness; the policeman at Lilford had ample reason to rejoice in the gentlemanly impulse that had made him assist the pale lady in black that wet morning; not satisfied with the liberal repayment of his loan, she assisted his family, and himself in so many ways, that the proprietor of the postchaise, who never heard the last of his incivility, was fain to hide his diminished head for very envy and self-reproach. Every good neighbour received some graceful token of remembrance, appropriate and serviceable, as well as handsome: for her sisters she could not do enough; some of their wildest wishes, which they had no idea she had ever noticed, were fulfilled to the uttermost; and her gratitude to Dr. Home would have vented itself in a revolution of improvements and decorations of the Rectory, but for his sturdy resistance. He was persuaded however, to own that the church was not quite in <sup>†</sup>1. 4

perfect condition, that defied ingenuity to detect a flaw ; Mr. Ousel's depressed spirits revived on being commissioned to select a new organ ; and though it was rather discouraging work to talk about ornament, where whitewash predominated, and pews were colossal, it was found that something might be done in painted lancet windows ; and Mr. Powys sent down designs and energetic counsel on the subject, sufficient for a cathedral.

One of these—the first put up—was a memorial.

There was a grand solemnity when Lady Adelaide laid the first stone of Mr. Randolph's new building, which had grown, from the original design, to one of considerable importance, and which he endowed with an annual stipend for master and mistress, and for the establishment and maintenance of a free library for the poor. On this occasion, Walter had a signal triumph, for his uncle, Lord Delaunay, came down at his special request, and delivered a popular lecture on natural philosophy, in the old school-room, to the boys and such adults as chose to be present ; when the whole mystery of the ice made by an air-pump was exhibited and explained ; whether it was understood or not, we cannot undertake to say, but it was received with unbounded admiration, and established Walter's scientific credit for ever.

When the golden October tinge was on the woods, Adelaide Lyndon became Maurice Randolph's wife.

Their united fortunes made them wealthy enough to have indulged in any extravagant display, had they been so disposed ; but such would have suited the tastes of neither. They lived as near Lady Delaunay as possible, until the Earl's marriage in the following spring ; and then they persuaded her to live with them, and in all her undertakings of mercy they were her able and diligent assistants. From her example they learned that even riches might be accompanied by self-denial ; and their superfluity found ample scope in instructing the ignorant, helping the struggling, and saving the lost. Wherever they resided, in town or country, this was their luxury, their delight. Even the poor gipsy girl was found and rescued, and placed under Mrs. Dalton's care ; and Isabella Unwin was won to a strenuous effort after her lost self-respect, which in the end was crowned with success, and Lady Delaunay's restored regard.

Miss Brittan remained a year under Dr. Home's care, and then returned to that of the Countess. Her former idleness and folly had been so effectually cured, that it was her great ambition to fit herself for an independent situation ; and her benefactress gratified her wishes, by giving her every advantage that she could desire ; but when the time came for these accomplishments to be turned to account, it so happened that an energetic young curate of Mr. Powys took it into his head that he could afford to marry a

per annum; and as it was impossible to persuade him to the contrary by plain argument, the only thing left to do before Lilla's bright eyes had cried it over more than a dozen times in one day, was to raise the income to as much again—which Lady Delaunay and Adelaide arranged between them; both cherishing a regard for the individual whose folly had first brought them together, that made them ready to do anything sooner than she should be unhappy. Her notions about living in a clergyman's house having undergone considerable change since she was first sent to one, she steadied down into as good and active a little parson's wife, as the lessons of experience had ever made out of such volatile materials.

Abner remained in Mr. Randolph's service and proved one of the best grooms a master ever had, as long as he was allowed his own way. Ever and anon he had a craving for a change, and a holiday was never refused him; but it generally turned out he had been down to Cannymoor, whence he one fine day brought a wife in the person of Mary Steadiman; and from that time Colly said she had no fears for him any longer, for Mary was a good lass, as knowed her Bible and her Catechism, and if she just walked before him in the right way, he'd be like to follow.

That maxim, unconscious of the high authority whence it came, was Lady Adelaide's method of influence. She walked before her husband in the path of religion and usefulness which had been endeared to her in adversity; and he followed because she led, and loved her the more, the more plainly he discovered whither she was leading. How he guarded, how he idolized her, may be left to the imagination. It was a love that so absorbed his whole being as to make those tremble that saw to what a slender prop he clung; at times he would tremble himself, as her warning returned to his memory, and he saw how much Indian perils and mental anguish had done to sap her strength, and throw a delicacy over her cheek; but still no one could fail to see that it was midsummer with her heart: a fount of gladness which past memories could not poison, which past bereavements could not embitter, was ever springing up within: affection, confidence, friendship—the daily improvement and ardent love of her boy,—an improvement in which Randolph took an unwearying part, and a love in which he won a place only second to her own—the devotion of her husband, the deep tenderness of her mother, and the consolations of faith and grace sanctifying all other blessings, made her noble nature expand in excellence, as a plant in a genial clime; never again, we hope, to be bowed down by care, or blighted by MISREPRESENTATION.

THE END.



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